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To

the Revd

Mr. John Richardson

from the Author

March 22. 1761.

Jane Nixon

Ah 1765

Mr J Wilson

LETTERS

ON THE

Sacred Predictions:

PROPER FOR THE

Consideration of all Sorts of People at all Times; more especially, whenever in Danger of PUBLICK CALAMITIES: Collected out of the Holy Scriptures; shewing the EVENTS, which some Persons have Reason to fear; and those for which others have Ground to hope.

Whereunto is added, a LETTER, containing an Answer to the QUESTION, viz. Whether the publick Reading the Holy Scriptures, on the Lord's Days is an ORDINANCE of divine Appointment; and a Part of the Worship which God requires from his People?

All intended for promoting Piety, and the Consolation of serious Christians of every Denomination.

By *THEOPHILUS LOBB*, M. D.
And C. R. M. L. C. and R. S. L. S.

Search the Scriptures. John v. 39.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

PREDICTIONS, are all thoſe Declarations of future EVENTS recorded in the Holy Scriptures, which God by his Providence has brought, or will bring to paſs; whether thoſe *Events* be Puniſhments. or Bleſſings.

THUS the Declarations of the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and of the Miſeries which befel the Jews, were Predictions.

THUS the Declarations of the Deliverance of the Children of Iſrael out of Egypt, and from the ſeventy Years Captivity, were Predictions; and ſo indeed, are all the Threatnings God has denounced againſt the Wicked; and all the Promiſes of Bleſſings, which he has made to Nations, or particular Perſons, who love and ſerve him, and keep his Commandments: And thus the *Sacred Declarations* in the two firſt of theſe Letters are Predictions.

THE Providence of the righteous and faithful God, is always fulfilling his Word: Therefore David ſaid unto God, *I will praiſe thee with my whole Heart,—for thy Loving-*

kindneſs, and for thy Truth; for thou haſt magnified thy WORD, *above all thy Name.* Pſal. cxxxviii. 1, 2. God has done it above every other Way, in which he had made himſelf known; and he does ſo ſtill, by bringing to paſs the *Events* foretold by the Prophets of the Old Teſtament, and by the bleſſed Jeſus, and the Apoſtles, and Prophets of the New.

IT is therefore incumbent on all Chriſtians to take Notice of them, ſo far as they ſhall come within their Knowledge; and to obſerve the Dealings of the ſupreme Governour of the World, with their own Country, and their Neighbours, and likewiſe with themſelves; whether the Events, which occur be merciful, or afflictive.

THE *Works of the Lord* (both thoſe of Creation, and thoſe of his Providence) *are great, ſought out of all them, that have Pleaſure therein. His Work* (of Providence, as well as of Creation) *is honourable, and glorious; and his Righteouſneſs endureth for ever. He hath made his wonderful Works to be remembred.* Pſal. cxi. 2, 3, 4. We ought therefore to obſerve, and remember them.

A DISREGARD of the Acts of the righteous and gracious God in his Government of the World, and more eſpecially in what relates to our own Country, our own Cities,

ties, and Families, and Perſons; is a provoking Diſregard of himſelf.

BECAUSE *they regard not the Works of the Lord, nor the Operation of his Hands, he ſhall deſtroy them, and not build them up.* It is ſaid Pſal. xxviii. 5.

THE two firſt of theſe Letters were publiſhed, 1750. under the Title of *Sacred Declarations, conſidered,* &c. and are now publiſhed again, with others ſubſervient to the ſame Deſign.

I HAVE in theſe Letters collected a Summary both of the *Law*, and *Goſpel*, and a Summary of the Predictions of Puniſhment appointed for the Wicked; and of the Predictions of Bleſſings for the Righteous, for all true Believers in this Life, at Death, and afterwards; and on theſe Accounts, it may be uſeful for Chriſtians frequently to look into them.

THE laſt Letter is added on the Account of the Importance of its Contents, and the many Advantages which may be obtained, by diffuſing the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures among the People.

IN the poetical Lines cited in theſe Letters, I have here and there changed a Word to render them more expreſſive of my own Thoughts.

THE

THE

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But suppose Challengers *to be really injured, the Laws of the Land have provided a Remedy, which he may use without Shame or Dishonour, and without becoming a bloody Criminal before God and Man. A Remedy which he may use with Reputation, by having his Cause heard before proper Judges, and their Sentence given upon the Evidence of the Witnesses of each Party.*

But he must not murder *the Man that has offended him,* (ibid) *and thereby rebel against, and subvert the Laws of God, and his Country.*

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6. *That*

6. *That the Time of the general* Resurrection *will be very* solemn, magnificent, *and* awful.

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BOOKS

BOOKS publiſhed by Dr. LOBB.

1. A DISCOURSE of the divine Inſtitution of the *Miniſtry* of the Goſpel, with Anſwers to the Arguments (in a Book intitled, *The Rights of the Chriſtian Church*, &c.) againſt it.

2. A DISCOURSE, wherein the Being of GOD; the divine Authority of the Holy *Scriptures*, and the Doctrine of the Sacred TRINITY, are briefly proved.

3. A BRIEF DEFENCE of the Chriſtian RELIGION for the Conviction of *Deiſts*; and the Eſtabliſhment of Chriſtians in the Belief of the Goſpel.

4. A DIALOGUE between a *Maſter* and his Servants, concerning the Sin of *Lying*, explaining the Nature, and ſhewing the Heinouſneſs of it, and of other Sins, for the concealing of which, Lying is often uſed; and propoſing a ſure Way to become free from the ſtrong Inclinations to it. A fit Preſent from Maſters, and Miſtreſſes, to their Servants, and from Parents to their Children.

5. An ANSWER to the QUESTION, *viz.* Whether it is lawful for the Profeſſors of the Chriſtian Religion to go to Plays? With ſome Soliloquies, proper in Relation to them.

6. LETTERS relating to the *Plague*, and other infectious *Fevers*, in two Parts, *viz.*

Part I. Containing LETTERS read at ſeveral Meetings of the *Royal Society*, ſhewing by Reaſon, and Experiments ſome proper Means to preſerve People from Infection, and to alter the morbid Quality of infectious Air.

Part II. Containing LETTERS, (not read to the Royal Society) ſhewing who may fly from a City, when the divine Providence brings the Peſtilence, or other infectious Fevers into it, and who are obliged in Duty to ſtay in it; and propoſing proper Means to preſerve *Magiſtrates*, and the *Miniſters of Chriſt*, and the Aſſemblies of People when met together, either for the Adminiſtration of Juſtice, or the Celebration of divine Worſhip: Like-

 wiſe

wiſe propoſing ſuitable Methods of Management in Families *before*, and *when*, and *after* the Diſtemper has been in them:

And likewiſe, as to the Conduct of *Phyſicians*, *Surgeons*, *Apothecaries*, *Nurſes*, and others obliged to attend or viſit the Sick: INTERMIXED with Advices to ſerious Chriſtians; and alſo ſhewing the Influence which ſuch an awful Viſitation ſhould have on the Minds of thoſe who have been negligent of Religion, and have lived in known and wilful Diſobedience to the holy Commandments of God. To which is added a LETTER concerning the *Mortality* among the Cattle.

7. A LETTER, intitled *Sacred Declarations, conſidered*, &c. Containing an Account of Things which may render People apprehenſive that publick Calamities are approaching; with a Summary of the divine Laws comprehended in the firſt Four of the ten Commandments; and of the Predictions of Puniſhments on thoſe who live in wilful Diſobedience to them: Likewiſe an Account of a ſure Way for Perſons under the terrible Threatnings of the holy God to obtain the Pardon of all their Sins, Peace, Safety, Comfort, and Happineſs.

8. A LETTER, containing both a Summary of the divine Laws comprehended in the Six laſt of the Ten Commandments; and of the Predictions of Puniſhments recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, for the wilful Tranſgreſſors of them, with proper Advices.

9. A TREATISE on the SMALL POX in its various Kinds, ſhewing what ought to be done in the Management of the Sick, in Regard to the ſeveral Periods of the Diſtemper, and the dangerous Symptoms incident to it, as to Diet and Medicines: Illuſtrated with *fifty* HISTORIES in which the Symptoms are exemplified, even the moſt Threatning; with an Account of the Management, and Remedies which were effectual to the Recovery of the Sick from this terrible Diſeaſe: Recommended to the Publick by the late learned Dr. BOERHAAVE, which Recommendation, with his expreſs Conſent, is Printed, and prefixed to the Book.

10. RA-

10. RATIONAL METHODS of curing *Fevers*, deduced from the Structure, and Oeconomy of human Bodies, and the different States of the Solids, and Fluids, under the different Claſſes of them.

11. MEDICAL Practice in curing *Fevers*, correſpondent to rational Methods, *&c.* Conſidered and Exemplified in many *Caſes* of the moſt uſual *Fevers*, with an Account of the Medicines by which they were removed.

12. A TREATISE or *Diſſolvents* of the *Stone*, and on curing the *Stone*, and *Gout* by Aliment, ſhewing, by Reaſon ſupported with Experiments and Caſes, the Probability of diſſolving the Stone, and preventing the Returns of the Gout by ſuitable Diet, with particular Directions of Diet, not only in regard to thoſe Diſorders, but likewiſe for the Benefit of Perſons afflicted with Fevers, and various other Diſeaſes.

13. A TREATISE on *painful Diſtempers*, the Cauſes of them, and the proper Remedies; illuſtrated with Hiſtories of Perſons afflicted with the different Kinds of Pains incident to human Bodies, with an Account of the Method and Medicines by which they were cured.

14. A COMPENDIUM of the Practice of *Phyſick*: Containing the Heads, or Subjects treated on in a Courſe of Lectures, intended for communicating thoſe Inſtructions, which may qualify Perſons for a judicious and ſucceſsful Management of People under the various Diſeaſes to which they are liable. Whereunto is added a LETTER, ſhewing, what is the proper *Preparation* of Perſons for *Inoculation*, and for having the SMALL POX favourably in the natural Way.

15. GENERAL Medical *Principles* and *Cautions*, for the Conſideration of ſuch as undertake to perform the Office of a Phyſician to the Sick, in three Parts, founded on FACTS ſupported by REASON, and confirmed by EXPERIENCE.

16. LETTERS on the *Sacred Predictions*, herewith publiſhed.

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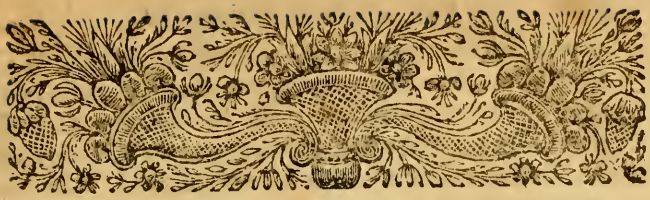

A

LETTER

TO THE

INHABITANTS of LONDON and WESTMINSTER, &c.

WHEN the Inhabitants of any City, or Country, have long revolted from God, when Iniquities have long abounded among them, they then have Reason to fear, and to expect a Suffering under the Divine Vengeance.

When they have long enjoyed the Means, and Opportunities of Knowing God, and his Will, and their Duty to him, and yet stubbornly remain regardless of them, and obstinately persist in Disobedience to his Commandments, they then have the strongest Arguments from the Nature of Things, and the Threatenings of the Divine Law, to be very apprehensive that Destruction from the Almighty may befal them.

It is ſaid in *Heb.* x. 26—31. *If we ſin wilfully after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which ſhall devour the Adverſaries* [of God.] *He that deſpiſed Moſes's Law died without Mercy under two, or three Witneſſes: Of how much ſorer Puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under Foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy Thing, and hath done Deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace: For we know him that hath ſaid, Vengeance* belongeth *unto me, ſaith the Lord.* And again, *The Lord ſhall judge his People.* It is *a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God.*

That the Inhabitants of *L*——— and *W*——— have long, and moſt dreadfully provoked the Wrath of the Holy God, and go on ſtill multiplying the Provocations of his deſtroying Judgments, is undeniably evident from what his *Lordſhip* the *Biſhop* of *London*, in his moſt ſeaſonable and ſerious Letter to the Clergy and People of theſe Cities, has very juſtly obſerved.

The Righteous God has not only manifeſted amazing Patience and Forbearance towards us, and the reſt of the People of *Great Britain*; but he has, through a Courſe of many Years, and by various Diſpenſations of his Providence, both merciful and afflicting, been calling us to Repentance, and Reformation, calling us to ſeek Peace with him: And he has given awful Tokens of his Indignation, on the account of the numberleſs Sins againſt him, by which the Land is polluted; Tokens that the Time of his tremendous Viſitation for Sin is very near; nay, but rather that is already begun.

I ſhall only mention Two Particulars out of many, *viz.* 1. The MORTALITY, which, for ſome Years, has been deſtroying the larger Cattle; by which God

God plainly admoniſhes us, that if we will not be reformed by ſuch Judgments, he will deſtroy our Perſons. 2. The EARTHQUAKES, which have lately happened. 1. The Mortality among the Cattle is one fearful Token. For after God had threatened to inflict divers Calamities on his People, if they would not hearken to him, and would not do all his Commandments, if they ſhall deſpiſe his Statutes, or if their Soul ſhould abhor his Judgments, ſo that they would not do all his Commandments, but break his Covenant; I ſay, after God had denounced various Judgments to be inflicted on them for their Sins, one of which was, that he *would deſtroy their Cattle.* (Lev. xxvi. 22.) He ſays, *If ye will not be reformed by me, by theſe Things, but will walk contrary unto me, then I will alſo walk contrary unto you, and will puniſh you ſeven Times for your Sins. And I will bring a Sword upon you, that ſhall avenge the Quarrel of my Covenant: And when ye are gathered together within your Cities, I will ſend the Peſtilence among you, and ye ſhall be delivered into the Hand of the Enemy.* Vid. *Lev.* xxvi. 23, 24, 25.

The Holy God, by continuing the *mortal Sickneſs* among the *Cattle*, tells us, that his Wrath is not turned away from us, that we muſt repent, and amend our Ways, or expect to feel his Vengeance in our Perſons; and by the ſlow Progreſs of the Mortality among the Cattle, through a Courſe of ſeveral Years, he ſhews himſelf a moſt merciful God, and that he is loth to deſtroy us. Therefore,

If People will not hearken to the Almighty, but go on in their Treſpaſſes, their Guilt will be moſt heinouſly aggravated, and the Righteouſneſs of God's deſtroying Judgments will be moſt conſpicuous, when they ſhall be executed.

The other Token of God's Diſpleaſure and Controverſy with us, are the EARTHQUAKES, which have

have lately happened, not only under these Two great Cities, but in other Parts of this Kingdom.

EARTHQUAKES are the Productions of the Almighty Power of God; and happen only when and where he commands them to happen: No Astronomer, no Philosopher, can tell when or where the terrible and mighty CONVULSIONS of the Earth shall be: No, no more than they can tell when the Wind will change from East to West, or to any other Point of the Compass, or how long it shall blow from this or that Quarter, or when it shall raise Storms and Tempests: And although natural Causes may be employed in producing such Effects, yet it is God who manages these natural Causes, and who can restrain, or quicken their Agency as he pleases, and who always does so.

It is the Mighty God, who makes the Earth to tremble; therefore said *David* (*Psalm* lx. 12.) *O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again. Thou hast made the Earth to tremble, thou hast broken it: Heal the Breaches thereof, for it shaketh.*

The Lord is the true God, and an everlasting King: At his Wrath, the Earth shall tremble, and the Nations shall not be able to abide his Indignation, said the Prophet, *Jer.* x. 10.

And the Prophet *Isaiah*, declaring God's Indignation against the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, for their Sins, says to them; *Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of Hosts with Thunder, and with Earthquake, and great Noise, with Storm, and Tempest, and the Flame of devouring Fire*, Isaiah xxix. 6.

And doubtless, when any other People fall under the like Guilt, they fall under the like Threatenings, which will be executed when ever the Lord pleases.

The Divine Power is never idle, or inactive: As it did act in the Creation of the Universe, so it is always

always acting in upholding, preſerving, and regulating all the Parts of it: and ſome Things appear to be the immediate Effects of the Divine Agency; particularly, the Courſe of the Wind, whence, and whither it blows, Storms, and Tempeſts, Thunderings, and Lightenings, and Earthquakes. *They that go down to the Sea in Ships, that do Buſineſs in great Waters; theſe ſee the Works of the Lord, and his Wonders in the Deep. For he commandeth, and raiſeth the ſtormy Wind, which lifteth up the Waves thereof*, Pſal. cix. 23, 24, 25.

The Agency of the Power of God appears likewiſe in his Management of Things in the Moral World, the Concerns of rational Creatures, the Things in which Nations, Cities, and Families, and particular Perſons are concerned. *Shall there be Evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it*, it is ſaid, *Amos* iii. 6.

FAMINES, and PESTILENCES, and EARTHQUAKES are tremendous Judgments of the Almighty and Holy God, by which Multitudes have been deſtroyed; yet, tremendous as they are, they are mentioned by our Bleſſed Saviour as foregoing SIGNS of greater Miſeries. For after he had foretold them, he ſays, *All theſe are the Beginning of Sorrows*. Mat. xxiv. 8.

And have not *Famines*, and *Peſtilences*, and *Earthquakes*, been lately in divers Places? And hath not the Inhabitants of *Great Britain*, and its Cities, long, even through the Courſe of many Years, been provoking the Moſt High? Have they not been regardleſs of his Laws, affronting his Authority, and defying his Juſtice, and his Power? And do they not ſtill go on in their evil Ways, and in a dreadful Rebellion a gainſt him? And what will be the End of ſuch a deſperate Courſe! Are not greater Calamities, and greater Deſtructions of Sinners, to be feared, and expected?

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The Prophet *Isaiah* having expostulated with the Inhabitants of *Judah* for their Wickedness, and Incorrigibleness, under those Judgments, which had been inflicted on them, adds, (*Isaiah* i. 24.) *Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.* And who are these? Doubtless, all who lead ungodly Lives: They evidently appear to be God's Enemies by their wicked Works: and inexpressible are the Terrors of the Time, when the Righteous God shall avenge himself of them.

I may likewise observe, that after the Prophet had said to the Lord, *Thou hast* forsaken thy People, he says to the People, *Enter into the Rock, and hide thee in the Dust for Fear of the Lord, and for the Glory of his Majesty*, (vid. *Isaiah* ii. 6, 10.) And he foretels their going *into the Clefts of the Rocks, and into the Tops of the ragged Rocks, for Fear of the Lord, and for the Glory of his Majesty, when he shall arise to shake terribly the Earth.*

When the incorrigible Sinners shall come to see the dreadful Execution of God's threatened Judgments, when the Arrows of his Wrath shall fly thick around them, when they shall hear nothing but dreadful Tidings, when they shall hear and see of many Families, and Multitudes destroyed, or reduced to extreme Distress and Misery, who a little before enjoyed Health, Prosperity, and Peace; when Dangers thicken about them, when their guilty Souls shall be filled with horrible Fears, they may fly from their Dwellings, and seek hiding Places for their Security, but they cannot fly from God, nor get out of the Reach of his Arm: Whitherfoever they shall go, the Just God is there; if in the City there comes a Pestilence, or Famine, without it the Sword may devour.

And

And altho' the Wicked, in a Time of Tranquillity, may for a while be ſtupid, and fearleſs, yet when God proceeds in a Controverſy with them, he will make their Hearts to ach, and their Fleſh to tremble, and fill their Souls with Conſternation, and amazing Terrors. Then the Sinners in *Zion* will be afraid, then Fearfulneſs will ſurprize the Hypocrites.

There is Reaſon, as I have obſerved, to think that the Day of the Lord's Viſitation of this Land for Sin is begun, and proceeding; and therefore the Hearts of ungodly Sinners may well faint with the Apprehenſion of the Evils that may juſtly be expected.

I ſay not theſe Things to drive any to Deſpair, but to excite them immediately to ſeek Peace, and Reconciliation, with the Holy God, through Faith in the Bleſſed Jeſus, who is both able and willing to ſave even the chief of Sinners, who return to God through him.

There is ſtill Room to hope for Mercy and Pardon. Therefore it is that the LORD ſtill waits, even that he may be gracious unto us.

If the Inhabitants of our Cities, if the People of our Land, will, like the *Ninevites*, believe God, and faſt and humble themſelves, and cry mightily unto God, and turn every one from his evil Ways, and from the Violence that is in their Hands, God will turn from his fierce Anger, and we ſhall not periſh. (vid. *Jonah* iii.)

For the Lord hath ſaid, *At what Inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it; if that Nation, againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.* Jer. xviii. 7, 8.

But we can have no well-grounded Hope of escaping the destroying Judgments of God, of God long provoked, till we see a great Reformation in our Cities and Nation.

Reformation is the Thing which the World, and the Providence of God do loudly call for; and that I may thro' the divine Blessing be an Instrument of his bringing a sinful People to Repentance, Faith, and Holiness, in Heart and Life, I shall give an Account of some Sorts of *Persons*, whom God will punish in the Day of his awful Visitation for Sin.

The Word of the Lord is the Derision of profane Sinners in these Days, no less than in Time past; yet the divine Providence is always fulfilling his Word.

Well did *David* say to God, *Thou hast magnified thy Word above all thy Name*, Psal. cxxxviii. 2. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit (Ephes. vi. xvii.) It is the great Means by which the holy Spirit subdues Sinners, and brings them to the Obedience of Faith, and by which he enableth Believers to conflict with, and overcome their spiritual Enemies, the Principalities, and Powers, and the Rulers of the Darkness of this World.

But the Generality of People are Strangers to the Word of God, and many who scoff at it never read it; yet the Time will come, will surely come, when all Men will be made to know somewhat of it, for they will be judged according to it.

It is certainly very seasonable, and needful. when God is risen out of his Place to punish the Inhabitants of the the Earth for their Iniquities, very needful, I say, to acquaint them with what the Word of the Lord has spoken concerning *various Sorts* of *Sinners*, and let them observe whether God in the Course of his Providences will not act according to the *Declarations* upon Record in his holy Word; and consider whether it is not their Interest, as well

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as Duty, to ſeek Peace with God, that ſo they may eſcape the Evil he has threatned.

And it deſerves the moſt ſerious Notice, and Conſideration, that the following Sorts of Perſons are particularly threatned with Puniſhments in the Day of God's Viſitation for Sin: And happy will it be if thoſe guilty Sorts of People, ſhall ponder in their Minds, what the Lord hath ſaid concerning them, and be prevailed with to fly from that Wrath which is coming on the Children of Diſobedience, by flying to the bleſſed Jeſus with the Wings of Faith, and becoming his true Diſciples, new Creatures in him, ſanctified by his Spirit, and made fruitful in Holineſs by Union, and Fellowſhip with him.

I. Thoſe Miniſters of the Word of God, of every Denomination, who either ſet bad Examples, or live in the Neglect of the Duty they owe to the People under their Care, are one Sort of Perſons particularly threatned by the holy God.

I mention theſe by Way of Preface, becauſe they are as Stewards of the Myſteries of God (1 Cor. iv. 1.) and have in Charge to teach the People, the Doctrines, the Statutes, the Commandments and the Ordinances of God; and becauſe their bad Examples, and Neglect of the Duties of their Miniſtry, are ſad Occaſions of Irreligion, and Wickedneſs among the People.

In *Iſaiah* v. 6, 9—12. the Word of the LORD ſays, *All the Beaſts of the Field come to devour*, yea, *all the Beaſts of the Foreſt. His Watchmen* are *blind, they* are *all ignorant, they* are *all dumb Dogs, they cannot bark*; ſleeping, *lying down, loving to ſlumber. Yea, they* are *greedy Dogs*, which *can never have* enough, *and they are Shepherds* that *cannot underſtand: They all look to their own Way, every one for his Gain from his Quarter. Come ye*, ſay they, *I will fetch Wine, and we will fill ourſelves with ſtrong Drink, and to-*

morrow ſhall be as this Day, and *much more abundant.*

By *Watchmen*, and *Shepherds*, were meant the *Prophets* and *Prieſts*, who, in the Days of ISAIAH, were Miniſters of the Word of God, who ought to have underſtood it, and been able to inſtruct the People in it, able to teach them, what God would have them to know, to believe, and to do; they ought to be Men free from Avarice, and of great Sobriety.

The Paſſages cited ſhew, that the following Sorts of bad Miniſters, are plainly threatned with Deſtruction in the Day of the Lord's Viſitation.

1. Thoſe Miniſters, who are *ignorant*, ignorant of thoſe Things, which God would have them teach the People, and ſo are no more capable of performing their Office, than Watchmen who are blind can ſee an approaching Danger, and thereupon give Warning of it, or guide People in the Way they ſhould go, but are like dumb Dogs, that cannot bark to give Notice when a Wolf is coming: Their Ignorance rendering them incapable of acquainting the People under their Care, with the Dangers their Souls are expoſed to.

2. Thoſe *lazy*, *careleſs* Miniſters, who wilfully neglect to perform the Duties of their ſacred Function, and indulge themſelves in Eaſe, Idleneſs, and Sloth. This is manifeſtly imported in thoſe Expreſſions, *ſleeping*, *lying down*, and *loving to ſlumber.*

3. Thoſe *covetous Miniſters*, who, tho' negligent of the Service they owe to their People, yet are for getting as much from them as they can, making their own ſecular Intereſt their chief Concern. This is plainly ſignified by thoſe Words, *viz. they* are *greedy Dogs*, which can *never have enough—they all look* to their *own Way*, *every one for his Gain from his Quarter.*

4. Thoſe

4. Thoſe *tipling* Miniſters, who are fond of ſtrong Liquors, and encourage others to drink with them to exceſs, and ſpeak Words, and act according to the Import of Verſe 12. *Come ye*, ſay they, *I will fetch Wine, and we will fill ourſelves with ſtrong Drink, and To-morrow ſhall be as this Day*, and *much more abundant*.

In *Jerem.* ii. 8, 9. are theſe Words, *viz. The Prieſts ſaid not, Where is the Lord? And they that handle the Law knew me not, the Paſtors alſo transgreſſed againſt me, and the Prophets prophesied by* Baal, *and walked after* Things that *do not profit. Wherefore I will yet plead with you, ſaith the Lord, and with your Children's Children will I plead.*

Theſe Words ſhew, that the holy God has a Controverſy with ungodly Miniſters, who are deſtitute of the ſaving Knowledge of him, and live in Diſobedience to him; ſuch Miniſters, inſtead of obtaining a Bleſſing on their Children, expoſe them to a Curſe, and the Lord will deal with thoſe Parents in a Way of Wrath.

In *Jerem.* xxiii. 2. it is written, *Therefore thus ſaith the* LORD *God of* Iſrael *againſt the Paſtors, that feed my People, Ye have ſcattered my Flock, and driven them away, and have not viſited them: Behold! I will viſit upon you the Evil of your Doings, ſaith the* LORD. Which Words ſhew, that God will viſit upon ſuch Paſtors, as will not faithfully perform their Duty, but neglect the Care of their People, that he will viſit upon them the Evil of their Doing.

The Apoſtle not only taught the People publickly, but from Houſe to Houſe, teaching Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt (ſee *Acts* xx. 20, 21.) but thoſe Miniſters who will not imitate the Example of the Apoſtle, but neglect to viſit their Sheep, and behave ſo, as to drive them

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from attending the ſacred Miniſtrations, provoke the Anger of God, and have Reaſon to expect a Feeling the bitter Effects of it.

In *Ezek.* xxii. 26, 31. the righteous God ſays, *Her Prieſts have violated my Law, and have profaned mine holy Things: They have put no Difference between the Holy and Profane, neither have they ſhewed* Difference *between the Unclean and the Clean, and have hid their Eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. I have conſumed them with the Fire of my Wrath: Their own Way have I recompenſed upon their Heads, ſaith the* LORD *God.* Theſe Paſſages ſhew, that thoſe Miniſters of God in ſacred things, who (regardleſs of their Duty) admit ungodly Perſons to thoſe divine Ordinances which are the peculiar Privilege of the Righteous, and reject the Righteous for whom they were appointed, and who will not look into, and obſerve the Laws of the Sabbath, to keep it holy, have Reaſon to be afraid, that the juſt God will pour out his Indignation upon them, and conſume them in the Day of his Viſitation for Sin.

Happy for them will it be, if thoſe Miniſters of the Word of God, who are the Objects of the Threatnings mentioned, ſhall conſider and lay them to Heart, and make the right Improvement of them.

II. Profane *Perſons*, who ſcoff at ſerious Things, who deride the Providence, or the Word, or the Commandments, or the Sabbaths, or the Ordinances, or the Worſhip, or the People of God, are Objects of his Viſitation and Wrath.

The Words and Actions of theſe Perſons ſhew an Enmity againſt God, and an impious Contempt of his Authority, and Laws, and a proud Diſdain of his People: And they bring upon themſelves the Character of *Scorners*, or of being ſcornful.

In *Prov.* iii. 33, 34. it is ſaid, *The Curſe of the Lord is in the Houſe of the Wicked——ſurely he ſcorneth the Scorners.* And in *Prov.* xix. 29. it is declared, *That Judgments* are prepared *for Scorners.* And therefore this Sort of Sinners have Reaſon to think, that divine Judgment will come heavy upon them in the Day of the Lord's Viſitation.

Scorners are dangerous Inhabitants of a City, for it is ſaid, *Prov.* xxix. 8. *Scornful Men bring a City into a Snare.*

Theſe are Tranſgreſſors of the firſt Command, which, as it forbids the having any other God, ſo it ſignifies, that it is our Duty to acknowledge, love, and reverence the true God, and have Reſpect to all his Statutes, and Ordinances, which theſe Sinners contemn and deſpiſe.

III. Idolaters. There are two Sorts of *Idolatry*; one, a Tranſgreſſion of the *firſt* of the Ten Commandments, the other, a Violation of the Second of them.

And thoſe Perſons are guilty of tranſgreſſing the firſt Commandment, who own, or acknowledge any Creature as God, or who pay religious Reſpect or Reverence, by any inward Action of their Minds, or Geſture of their Body, to any Creature as God and the Object of their Worſhip.

Theſe Actions are an Acknowledgment of ſuch a Creature as God, and is the having another God before the Face, or beſides Jehovah, the one only living and true God; and is the Sin, the Idolatry forbidden in *Exod.* xx. 3. where the Almighty ſays, *Thou ſhalt have no other God, before Me.*

And this is a moſt heinous Impiety; becauſe it is an Acknowledgment of divine Perfections, *Wiſdom*, *Knowledge*, *Holineſs*, *Power*, and *Goodneſs*, to be the Attributes of ſuch a Creature, and a giving to ſuch a Creature the Glory due to God alone.

And

And ſince God has given to Man an Underſtanding to know Things, and a reaſoning Faculty to draw proper Concluſions, it is the more abſurd and irrational in Man, to entertain an Apprehenſion, that any material Subſtance is poſſeſſed with the Attributes of that Being who formed it.

The *ſecond* Commandment forbids Mens making any *Images* to be the *Means* of religious Worſhiping the true God——As the firſt Commandment relates to the Object of divine Worſhip, ſo the Second to the Means of it. It ſays, *Thou ſhalt not make to thyſelf any graven Image, or any Likeneſs* of any Thing *that is in Heaven above, or that* is *in the Earth beneath, or that* is *in the Water under the Earth. Thou ſhalt not bow down thyſelf to them nor ſerve them.* (Vid. *Exod.* xx. 4, 5.)

And as the Law forbids the making any Repreſentations, as the Means of Worſhip, and the performing any bodily Actions expreſſive of Reverence to them; ſo it muſt be underſtood for the ſame Reaſons, to forbid thoſe internal Acts of the Mind, which ſignify a religious Devotion to them.

Worſhipping the true God by Means of a molten or graven Image, was the *Idolatry* of the Children of *Iſrael.* When the golden Calf was made, the People ſaid, *Theſe* be *thy Gods, O* Iſrael, *which brought thee out of the Land of* Egypt, *Exod.* xxxii. 4. *q. d.* This Image is to repreſent God, who delivered us from our Bondage to the *Egyptians*, we will keep in Remembrance our Deliverance, and expreſs our Reverence of *Jehovah* our God, by Acts of Adoration to this Image.

For they kept a Feaſt to *Jehovah*, by Means of that golden Calf.

Aaron made Proclamation, and ſaid, *To-morrow is a Feaſt to the* LORD, *i. e. Jehovah.* (Exod. xxxii. 5.) and *ver.* 6. it is ſaid, *They roſe up early on the Morrow,*

Morrow, and offered Burnt-offerings, and brought Peace-offerings, (i. e. to *Jehovah*) and this they did by Means of the *Golden Calf*, by performing their Acts of religious Worſhip to it; as a Repreſentation of God, who had brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*.

Now from what has been obſerved, the Nature of the Sin of *Idolatry* is very manifeſt, and the Idolatry forbidden by the ſecond Commandment, is a very heinous Iniquity; obſcuring from the Idolaters, the Brightneſs, the Glory of the divine Majeſty, by making Images of Creatures, or other, real or imaginary, Repreſentations of God, becauſe ſuch Repreſentations can only excite falſe and debaſing Ideas of a Being who is inviſible, who never was ſeen, or can be ſeen; and whoſe Glory it is to be unlike all ſenſible Objects, and infinitely to tranſcend the moſt excellent Creatures. *To whom then will ye liken God? Or what Likeneſs will ye compare to him?* ſays the inſpired Prophet *Iſaiah* xl. 18. and *v.* 25. *To whom then will ye liken me? or ſhall I be equal? ſays the holy One.*

It is a vile Indignity to the great God, to make any Repreſentation, or Image to be the Means of worſhiping him; a Practice very provoking of his Anger.

How terrible did the holy God reſent it, when the *Iſraelites* were guilty of it.

The Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Go, get thee down; for thy People which thou broughteſt out of the Land of Egypt, have corrupted themſelves. They have turned aſide quickly out of the Way which I commanded them; *they have made them a molten Calf, and have worſhiped it, and have ſacrificed thereunto, and ſaid, Theſe* be *thy Gods, O Iſrael, which have brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt* v. 7, 8.——*Now therefore let me alone, that my Wrath may wax hot againſt them, and that I may conſume them.* v. 10.

Moſes indeed prayed for the People, and God did not deſtroy them, though many of the Idolaters by his Appointment were ſlain.

Moſes bewailed their Idolatry, and ſaid, *O this People have ſinned a great Sin*, v. 27, 28.—*And the Lord plagued the People, becauſe they made the Calf which Aaron made.*

Surely the ſad Examples of the *Iſraelites* herein, and the Manifeſtations of God's Wrath againſt them, ſhould make all Men ever after afraid of worſhiping even the true God by Means of any Images whatever.

It was the ſame Sort of Idolatry which *Jeroboam* King of *Iſrael* eſtabliſhed by his Authority. *He took Counſel and made two Calves of Gold, and ſaid unto them*, (i. e. his Subjects) *It is too much for you to go up to Jeruſalem: Behold thy Gods, O Iſrael, which brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt. And he ſet the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.* 1 Kings xii. 28, 29.

And thus did *Jeroboam* bring the Children of *Iſrael* to ſin againſt the Lord their God.

And whoever, to expreſs, or ſignify their Reverence or Worſhip of the moſt high God, ſhall perform Acts of Homage, Reverence, and Worſhip to any *Image*, molten, graven, or painted, is guilty of the like Idolatry.

God has, in very many Paſſages of his Word, threatned to puniſh Idolaters in the Day of his Viſitation for Sin. And there are many Inſtances upon Record in the ſacred Scriptures of his having done ſo; and it concerns every one that is guilty of this Sin, to conſider that Idolaters ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God. 1 *Cor.* vi. 9.

IV. Proud Perſons are another Sort whom the holy God has threatened to puniſh in the Day of his Viſitation for Sin.

Various is the Fuel for Pride, *viz.* fine Houſes, the Ornaments for Apparel, Furniture, Gardens, Riches,

Riches, and Equipage, Beauty, Learning and Honour, and divers other Things.

Pride is a Man's overvaluing himſelf on Account of ſome natural, or acquired, or imaginary Gifts, or Excellencies; it is when a Man thinks of himſelf more highly than he ought to do.

Proud Perſons are Idols to themſelves, and Tranſgreſſors of the firſt Commandment, and have not that Love to God, that Reverence of him, or that Humility of Mind which are their Duty; and God admoniſhes them by awful Threatnings.

In *Iſaiah* ii. 11, 12. the Prophet ſays, *The lofty Looks of Man ſhall be humbled, and the Haughtineſs of Men ſhall be bowed down, and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in that Day. For the Day of the Lord of Hoſts* ſhall be *upon* every one that is *proud and lofty, and upon every one* that is *lifted up, and he ſhall be brought low.* And in Confirmation of this it is added *v.* 17. *And the Loftineſs of Man ſhall be bowed down, and the Haughtineſs of Men ſhall be made low: and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in that Day*, i. e. *in* the Day wherein he viſits for Sin.

And concerning Women it is declared in *Iſaiah* iii. 16. *Moreover the Lord ſaith*, Becauſe the *Daughters of* Zion *are haughty*, and walk *with ſtretched forth Necks, and wanton Eyes, walking, and mincing as they go, therefore the Lord will ſmite with a Scab the Crown of the Head of the Daughters of Zion:* v. 17.

And the Prophet declares *v.* 18. *In that Day (viz.* of Viſitation for Sin) *the Lord will take away the Bravery of their Ornaments*, and greatly afflict them (read *v.* 18. to the End of *v.* 24.)

Pride goeth before Deſtruction, and an haughty Spirit before a Fall, it is ſaid *Prov.* xvi. 18.

The Prophet *Ezekiel* (in *Ezek.* xvi. 49.) ſaid to the Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, *Behold this was the Iniquity of thy Siſter Sodom, Pride, Fulneſs of Bread* (i. e.

Luxury) *and abundance of Idleneſs was in her, and in her Daughters.* And what was the Conſequence? Truly, a moſt dreadful and utter Deſtruction by Fire and Brimſtone.

This Example of the divine Vengeance (with the Threatnings mentioned) they who indulge themſelves in Pride, Luxury, and Idleneſs, have Reaſon to be afraid, when the righteous God executeth his Judgments for Sin.

V. Perſons who are Lovers of Pleaſures more than Lovers of God, are another Sort that have Reaſon to expect a terrible Feeling of the Wrath of the Almighty, when he viſits for Sin.

Senſual Delights engroſs the Affections of many People. It is the chief Thing they ſeek after; for which they take unwearied Pains, and are at Expences far beyond what their Incomings will allow; and for the Enjoyment of which many impoveriſh themſelves and their Families.

And are not they who *love Pleaſures more than they love God*, are they not in a black Liſt? and placed with *Blaſphemers*, *falſe Accuſers*, *incontinent*, *fierce*, *Deſpiſers of thoſe that are good*, *Traitors*, &c. See 2 *Tim.* iii. 2—4.

And do not they love their Pleaſures more than they love God, who neglect the Duties they owe to God, for the Sake of being preſent at places of publick Diverſions and Entertainments?

If a Man takes all Opportunities of being in the Company of one Acquaintance, and induſtriouſly ſhuns the Company and Converſation of another, it is plain, to a Demonſtration, that he loves the one, and diſlikes, and hates the other.

And thus, as to the Lovers of Pleaſure, it is moſt evident, that they are Haters of God, and ſome of his Enemies.

They go with ardent Deſires to Plays, Operas, and other Places of ſenſual Delights, but will not

endure the Performance of religious Exercifes in their Families, or Clofets, nor will go to the Places of publick Worfhip.

And will not the Moft High fhew his Indignation againft thofe, when he is rifen out of his Place to punifh People for their Iniquities?

What God faid concerning *Babylon*, manifefts his Indignation againft this Sort of Sinners; and that they have Caufe to expect the bitter Fruits of it. *Therefore hear now this, thou that* art *given to Pleafures, that dwelleft carelefly-----thefe two Things fhall come to thee in a Moment, in one Day, the Lofs of Children, and Widowhood, they fhall come upon thee in their Perfection.* Ifa. xlvii. 8, 9.

The Prophet fays, *Woe unto them——the Harp, and the Viol, and Tabret, and Pipe, and Wine are in their Feafts, but they regard not the Work of the Lord, neither confider the Operation of his Hands.* Ifa. v. 11.

And the Prophet *Amos* fays, *Woe to them* that are *at Eafe in Zion——Ye that* put far away *the evil Day, and caufe the Seat of Violence to come near; that lie upon Beds of Ivory, and ftretch themfelves upon their Couches, and eat the Lambs out of the Flock, and the Calves out of the midft of the Stall; that chant to the Sound of the Viol——that drink Wine in Bowls, and anoint themfelves with the chief Ointments; but they are not grieved for the Affliction of Jofeph.* See *Amos* vi. 1—7. and read *Deut.* xxviii. 15. *ad finem.*

The holy God will put an End to their Pleafures, and bring them to weeping, and howling, and bitter Lamentation, when he vifits a People for their Iniquities.

The Prophet fays, in *Ifa.* xxviii. 21, 22. *For the Lord fhall rife up as in Mount Perazim, he fhall be wroth as in the Valley of Gibeon, that he may do his Work, his ftrange Work; and bring to pafs his Act, his ftrange Act. Now therefore be ye not Mockers, left your Bands be made ftrong; for I have heard from the*

the Lord God of Hosts, a Consumption even determined upon the whole Earth.

Then the Mirth of Tabrets ceaseth, the Noise of them that rejoice endeth, the Joy of the Harp ceaseth— All Joy is darkened, the Mirth of the Land is gone, (Isaiah xxiv. 8, 11.) Thus it will be, when God is punishing the Inhabitants of a Land for their Iniquities.

Then will I cause to cease from the Cities of Judah, and from the Streets of Jerusalem, the Voice of Mirth, and the Voice of Gladness, says the righteous God, speaking of the Time when he would inflict his Judgment for the Iniquities of his People.

These Declarations of the Almighty deserve the Notice of them who indulge themselves in sensual Pleasures.

VI. Profaners of the holy Name of God, are another Sort of Sinners that have Reason to expect Punishment in the Day of Visitation for Sin.

I understand by Profaneness, an irreligious Treatment, by Words or Actions, of somewhat sacred, in Violation of the divine Laws concerning it.

God is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of the Saints : and to be had in Reverence of all them that are about him, (Psalm lxxxix. 7.) *Holy and reverend is his Name,* (Psalm iii. 9.)

All the Names, the Titles, Attributes, the Providence and Word of the Most High, even every Thing by which he has made himself known, ought always to be mentioned and treated with Seriousness and Reverence.

But all those Words and Actions of Men relating to them, which signify a Contempt of them, or a Want of Reverence to God, are Instances of Profaneness.

Thou

Thou ſhalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his Name in vain. Exod. xx. 7.

People take the Name of God in vain, when they uſe or mention it for trifling and vain Purpoſes; as many do in common Diſcourſe, without any Occaſion; and when it can only ſerve to ſhew an Irreverence of the Great Jehovah, and to ſet bad Examples to all that hear them.

But let ſuch profane Sinners remember, that tho' they may eſcape Puniſhment from Men, yet *the Lord will not hold them guiltleſs*, and let them conſider the tremendous Import of that Declaration.

It is yet a more aggravated Profaneneſs of the Name of God, when Men *ſwear falſely* by it; becauſe it is an impious Calling on God, or appealing to him, as Witneſs to a Falſehood, and is a concealing of Truth, or ſomething which ſhould be known, and is often injurious to others. It is ſpeaking a Lye with an Oath.

Hear ye this—which ſwear by the Name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Iſrael, but not in Truth, not in Righteouſneſs, ſaid the holy God to his People, *Iſaiah* xlviii. 1. *Will ye ſwear falſely—And come, and ſtand before me, and ſay, we are delivered to do all theſe Abominations.—Behold, even I hath ſeen it, ſaith the Lord. Therefore I will caſt you out of my ſight.* Jer. vii. 9, 11.

Becauſe of Swearing the Land mourneth, ſaid the Prophet, *Jer.* xxiii. 10.

Hear the Word of the Lord, ye Children of Iſrael, (ſaid *Hoſea*) *for the Lord hath a Controverſy with the Inhabitants of the Land, becauſe* there is *no Truth, nor Mercy, nor Knowledge of God in the Land. Therefore ſhall the Land mourn.* Hoſ. iv. 1, 3.

This is the Curſe that goeth forth over the Face of the whole Earth, for every one that ſtealeth ſhall be cut off,

off, as on this Side, and every one that ſweareth SHALL BE CUT OFF, *as on that Side, according to it*, it is ſaid, *Zech.* v. 3.

There is yet another, and a very dreadful Sort of profaning the Name of God, that is, when a Man, on any Provocation from another, ſhall pray to God to damn him, or that the Plague may take him, or that ſome other Evil may befal him.

This is a profane Practice, which not only tranſgreſſes the Laws of God, which requires us to love our Enemies, to love all Men, to pray for them which deſpitefully uſe us, but it is a treating God as if he was to fulfil their malicious Deſires, and to make his Power to ſubſerve their immoral Wiſhes; and ſuch have abundant Reaſon to expect Puniſhment, when God viſits for Sin.

VII. PROFANERS of God's Sabbaths are another Sort of Sinners, which provoke God to ſend deſtroying Judgments.

The Sabbath is profaned, when People fall into a Diſlike of it, and wilfully miſpend the Time of it, tranſgreſſing thoſe Laws, which require us to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy, *i. e.* to employ it in religious Exerciſes, except what Time muſt be taken up in the Works of Neceſſity and Works of Mercy.

They who wilfully neglect the holy Convocation of People, appointed to be on the Sabbath, and will not give their Attendance on the Offices of the publick Worſhip of God, but tranſact their ſecular Affairs, buy and ſell, or receive or make Viſits of Entertainment, or take their Recreations and Pleaſure on the Day, or ſpend the Time in Idleneſs, are Profaners of the Sabbath.

Six Days ſhalt thou labour, and do all thy Work, (*i. e.* about thy worldly Affairs) *but the ſeventh Day is*

is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it *thou ſhalt not do* any Work, *thou, nor thy Son, nor thy Daughter, nor thy Man-Servant, thy Maid-Servant, nor thy Cattle, nor the Stranger that is within thy Gates.*

And the holy God ſays, *If thou turn away thy Foot from the Sabbath*, from *doing thine own Pleaſure on my holy Day, and* (ſhalt) *call the Sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the Lord*, honourable, *and ſhalt honour him*, not doing thine *own Ways, nor finding thine own Pleaſure, nor ſpeaking thine own Words. Then ſhalt thou delight thyſelf in the Lord, and I will cauſe thee to ride upon the high Places of the Earth, and feed thee with the Heritage of Jacob thy Father; for the Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.* Iſa. lviii. 13, 14.

It appears from theſe Paſſages, that God does not allow us on the Sabbath, either to do any worldly Buſineſs, or to gratify ourſelves even with thoſe Recreations and Pleaſures, which are lawful on other Days: It appears, that if we prize the Day of Sacred Reſt, and take Delight in the religious Exerciſes of it, and abſtain from our own ſecular Works, and Words, and Pleaſures, we ſhall then pleaſe our moſt gracious God, and have his Bleſſing upon us, and have his Bleſſing manifeſted to us by kind Diſpenſations of his Providence towards us: And it appears alſo, that if we allow ourſelves to break his Laws concerning the Sabbath, we provoke his Wrath.

God hath promiſed to them that keep his Sabbaths, and chooſe the Things that pleaſe him, and take hold of his Covenant, that he will give them *an everlaſting Name, that ſhall not be cut off:* That them who *join themſelves to the Lord to ſerve him, and to love the Name of the Lord to be his Servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of his Covenant, even them will he bring to his holy Mountain, and make them joyful in his Houſe of Prayer.* Read *Iſaiah* lvi. 4—8.

But moſt tremendous are the Declarations of the righteous God againſt his own People for profaning his Sabbath.

That is an awful Declaration of the LORD of Hoſts in *Ezek.* xx. 21.

They polluted my Sabbaths: Then I ſaid I would pour out my Fury upon them. And this Impiety is mentioned as one Cauſe of deſtroying Judgments, and of God's with-holding his Favour and Bleſſing. *v.* 13, 10, 24.

This Irreligion is reckoned among the crying Sins of the Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, (*Ezek.* xxii. 8.) *Thou haſt deſpiſed mine holy Things, and haſt profaned my Sabbaths*, ſaid the holy God.

And after the mentioning of their Provocations, God ſays, (*ib. v.* 14.) *Can thine Heart endure, or can thine Hands be ſtrong in the Days that I ſhall deal with thee? I the Lord have ſpoken it, and I will do it. And I will ſcatter thee among the Heathen, and diſperſe thee in the Countries, and will conſume thy Filthineſs out of thee*; ver. 16.

Many People break God's Sabbaths without Remorſe, becauſe they meet with no Puniſhments from Men, and becauſe the Judgments of God are not ſpeedily executed; but they muſt not think to eſcape ſo in the Day of God's Viſitation for Sin: The Threatnings mentioned plainly ſhew, that they ſhall not eſcape.

I have, in the foregoing Particulars, conſidered the *Declarations* of the righteous God concerning ſome Sorts of Perſons who are wilful, ſtubborn Tranſgreſſors of one or other of the four firſt of the Ten Commandments, recorded in *Exodus* xx. and I intended to have related ſome of the awful Things, which the Lord hath ſpoken in his Word of thoſe, who live in wilful Diſobedience to his other Commandments; but that what has been written may

ſooner

ſooner get into the Hands of thoſe whom it chiefly concerns, I thought it needful firſt to publiſh this Part of what I propoſed to offer to the moſt ſerious Thoughts of People.

The DECLARATIONS of the Judge of the whole Earth, which have been related, are indeed full of doleful Tidings, Tidings which may juſtly fill the Minds of People with an awful Fear and Dread of provoking the Divine Anger, and excite them to forſake their Sins.

Are not the Threatnings mentioned, the Threatnings of Almighty God, againſt thoſe Sorts of Perſons, who are the Objects of them! And is not the Great God able to execute them! And will he not do ſo, in caſe the Guilty remain incorrigible!

And when, in Way of his Providence, he proceeds to fulfil his Threatnings, can the guilty Sinners, againſt whom they are pronounced, expect to eſcape them? Can they fly from God? Can they get out of the Reach of his almighty Arm? Can they hide themſelves, where he cannot find them? *Can any hide himſelf in ſecret Places, that I ſhall not ſee him?* SAITH THE LORD. *Jer.* xxiii. 24. *He ſhall not be able to hide himſelf*, ſays God, *Jerem.* xlix. 10.

Every one has Reaſon to ſay unto God, as *David* did, *Pſ.* cxxxix. 1. *O Lord, thou haſt ſearched me, and known me—thou underſtandeſt my Thought afar off—and are acquainted with all my Ways—For* there is *not a Word in my Tongue*, but lo, *O Lord thou knoweſt it altogether.——Whither ſhall I go from thy Spirit? or whither ſhall I flee from thy Preſence? If I aſcend up into Heaven, thou art there: if I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there. If I ſay, ſurely the Darkneſs ſhall cover me; even the Night ſhall be Light about me; yea, the Darkneſs hideth not from thee.*

Theſe are certain Truths: How vain and fooliſh is it then for guilty, ſtubborn Sinners to ſeek by Flight a Safety from the Judgments God has denounced againſt them.

But is there no Hope? Is there no eſcaping the Wrath and Vengeance of the holy God? I anſwer, there is none by Flight, none by Riches, none by human Power or Policy.

Yet, bleſſed be the merciful God, there is ſome Hope remaining; there is a Door of Hope, opened by the gracious *Declarations*, and kind Invitations which Almighty God, infinite in Goodneſs, has made to thoſe who provoked him to deſtroy them.

Waſh ye, make you clean (ſays our God who delights in Mercy, *Iſaiah* i. 16, &c.) *Put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, ceaſe to do Evil, learn to do well, ſeek Judgment, relieve the Oppreſſed, judge the Fatherleſs, plead for the Widow.*

Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord: Though your Sins be as Scarlet, they ſhall be as white as Snow; though they be red like Crimſon, they ſhall be as Wool.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the Good of the Land. v. 19. Which implies not only that God would then pardon them, and forbear to inflict the Judgments threatened againſt them, but alſo that God would bleſs them, and provide carefully for them.

It is added, *ver.* 20. *But if ye refuſe, and rebel, ye ſhall be devoured with the Sword: for the Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.* Signifying, that if they would not repent of their Sins, but go on in their Treſpaſſes, and continue their Rebellion againſt God, they ſhould certainly be deſtroyed.

In *Jerem.* xviii. 7, 8. our merciful God ſays, *At what Inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and*

to

to deſtroy it, if that Nation, againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.

In *Ezek.* xxxiii. 11. *As I live ſaith the Lord God, I have no Pleaſure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way, and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil Ways: for why will ye die, O Houſe of Iſrael?*

In *Ezek.* xviii. 21, 22. it is ſaid, *But if the Wicked will turn from all his Sins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die. All his Tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, they ſhall not be mentioned unto him.*

How amazing is the Mercy of God! What Encouragement is here to engage the Wicked to turn from their evil Ways, to repent of their Sins, and to return to God and their Duty? How ſhould the Loving-kindneſs of God make us aſhamed of the Tranſgreſſions and Offences we have committed againſt him! Is God willing to be reconciled to us, notwithſtanding the Multitudes and Heinouſneſs of our Crimes! and willing ſo perfectly to forgive them, that they ſhall not be even mentioned to us for a Reproach, and Condemnation, if we turn from all our Sins, and conſcientiouſly keep all his Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right. And ſhall we not be thankful for the wonderful Manifeſtations of Divine Grace, and return unto the Lord our God!

O that there was ſuch an Heart in all the Wicked! *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found,* (ſays the Prophet) *call ye upon him while he is near. Let the Wicked forſake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Iſa. lv. 6, 7.

Ye are gone away from mine Ordinances, and have not kept them: Return unto me, and I will return unto you, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts. Mal. iii. 7.

Therefore ſay thou unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, Turn ye unto me, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, and I will turn unto you, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, Zech. i. 3.

Now theſe glorious *Declarations* of God, are certain Evidences that God is willing to be reconciled to Sinners, notwithſtanding the Number of their Sins, and although they have long lived in Diſobedience to him: They ſhew that there is a Way, and a ſure Way to Reconciliation and Peace with him, a ſure Way to obtain Forgiveneſs, and the Favour of God; and therefore a ſure Way to Safety, Comfort, and Happineſs.

But what is the Way by which Sinners may return to God? This is a moſt important Enquiry, and our Bleſſed Saviour anſwers it in *John* xiv. 6. *Jeſus ſaith unto him*, (that is, to *Thomas*, ver. 5.) *I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: No Man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

The ſure Way of returning to God acceptably, is through Faith in Chriſt Jeſus, the only Saviour, and the only Mediator between God and Man.

Faith in Chriſt is the only Way to obtain Salvation from our Sins, and Peace with God, *I am the Door; by me if any Man enter in, he ſhall be ſaved*, ſaid our compaſſionate Saviour, *John* x. 9.

Look unto me, and be ye ſaved, all the Ends of the Earth, ſaith our gracious Redeemer, *Iſaiah* xlv. 22.

This is the Way that God in his Word has revealed, and directs us to.

And it is what the Miniſters of the Goſpel are to inſtruct us in.

They

They are to acquaint us, that there is a Fountain opened for Sin, and for Uncleanneſs, (*Zech.* xiii. 1.) in which we may waſh, and be clean: They are to preach that the Blood of *Jeſus Chriſt cleanſeth us from all Sin*, (1 *John* i. 7.) if we believe in his Name.

They are to preach Repentance towards God, and Faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, (*Acts* xx. 21.) and to publiſh thoſe *Declarations*, which the God of Mercy and Salvation has made in his Word, concerning thoſe that repent of their Sins, and believe in the Lord Jeſus, ſuch as the following, *viz.*

Acts ii. 38. *Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins, and ye ſhall receive the Holy Ghoſt.*

Acts iii. 19. *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the Times of Refreſhing ſhall come from the Preſence of the Lord.*

And that in *John* iii. 16. *viz. God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

John i. 12. *As many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.*

John xii. 46. *I am come a Light into the World,* (ſaid our gracious Saviour) *that whoſoever believeth on me, ſhould not abide in Darkneſs.*

Acts xvi. 31. It is ſaid, *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved.*

Theſe ſacred Declarations of God, ſhew plainly that there is a Way, and a ſure Way to obtain the Pardon of Sin and eternal Life, and they ſhew to us what this Way is, *viz.* the Way of Repentance and Faith; or the turning from our Sins, and return-

turning to God, and the Obedience we owe unto him; and the receiving Chrift, as our Saviour, and Prince, and trufting in him alone for Salvation.

And other Declarations recorded in the divine Word, do manifeft that this Way is the Way to *Safety*, *Comfort*, and *Happinefs*.

It is the Way to SAFETY. For in *Deut.* xxxiii. 12. it is faid, *The beloved of the Lord fhall dwell in Safety by him, and the Lord fhall cover him* (or protect him from Evil) *all the Day long.*

And in *Prov.* xviii. 16. it is faid, *The Name of the* LORD *is a ftrong Tower; the Righteous rnnneth into it, and is fafe.*

In *John* xi. 18, 19. *Thou fhalt take thy Reft in Safety. Alfo thou fhalt lie down, and none fhall make thee afraid.*

In *Ifa.* xxxii. 18. Our God fays, *My People fhall dwell in a peaceable Habitation, and in fure Dwellings, and in quiet refting Places.*

And that it is the Way to COMFORT appears from fuch Declarations as the following, *viz.*

Pfal. cxix. 165. *Great Peace* (and therefore much Comfort) *they have which love thy Law, and nothing fhall offend them.*

In *Pfal.* cxii. 7. it is faid, *He fhall not be afraid of evil Tidings; his Heart is fixed trufting in the Lord.*

In *Pfal.* xxix. 11. it is declared, that, *The* LORD *will blefs his People with Peace.*

It is the good Pleafure of our heavenly Father, that they who love and ferve him, fhould enjoy inward Peace and Confolation.

Comfort ye, comfort ye, my People, faith your God. Ifa. xl. 1.

COMFORT is promifed to repenting Sinners in *Ifa.* lvii. 18. *I have feen his Ways, and will heal him: I will lead him alfo, and reftore Comforts unto him.*

And

And the bleſſed Jeſus has promiſed unto his Diſciples the holy Spirit as a Comforter in *John* xiv. 16. ſaying, *I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.*

This Way is alſo a ſure Way to Happineſs, to Happineſs both in this World and in that which is to come.

It is declared in 1 *Tim.* v. 8. *That Godlineſs is profitable unto all Things, having the Promiſe of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

The Abundance of precious Promiſes, Promiſes of Bleſſings, ſpiritual and temporal, in this World to ſerious Chriſtians, who believe in the Lord Jeſus, and love, and ſerve God in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs, the Promiſes of an eternal Salvation, of a Crown of Glory, of an everlaſting Life, and of eternal Inheritance, (Heb. ix. 15.) are Evidences that there is a ſure Way to Happineſs.

The Apoſtle *Peter* ſays, *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, which, *according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven* for you, 1 *Pet.* i. 3, 4.

In this World, many are the Afflictions of the Righteous, tho' few, very few, in Compariſon with the Numbers of the Mercies they enjoy; and light, very light, in Compariſon with the Weight and Importance of the Bleſſings God has beſtowed on them: But God is preſent with them in all their Afflictions, he puts under them the everlaſting Arms, and will moſt certainly deliver them out of all their Troubles.

He will make all Things to iſſue well unto them, as appears from that Declaration, *Rom.* viii. 28.

viz. *All Things work together for Good to them that love God, to them who are the Called according to his Purpose.*

I have now shewed from the infallible Word of God, the Way that leads to the Suffering of his Wrath in this World, and to an endless Destruction in the next; and also the Way, and the sure Way to Safety, Comfort, and Happiness, here and for ever hereafter.

I shall now conclude this Letter, with a brief Address to those Sorts of Persons, whom the righteous God has threatned with Punishments in this World.

And let me intreat such of you to consider the awful Threatnings denounced against you. You are the Objects, the miserable Objects of the divine Anger. The LORD's Indignation is against you, his terrible Controversy is with you. You have been hitherto heaping up Wrath against the Day of Wrath; the Day of his wrathful Visitation for Sin.

And tho' he may suffer many Individuals, in each Sort of Sinners, to escape, in this World, his threatned Vengeance, yet Multitudes will be destroyed, and by a dreadful Violence be sent to take their dreadful Abode with Devils reserved in Chains under Darkness to the final Judgment.

And you do not know, that you shall not be some of this Multitude.

O ponder this in your Thoughts, and reason with yourselves in the following Manner, as you have good Cause to do so, *viz.*

" How lamentable is my Condition! how fearful
" are the Threatnings of the Almighty! how
" shall I be able to bear the Execution of them!
" How bitter are the Reflections on the Iniquities
" of my Heart and Life! What Advantage,
" what Consolation have I, or can I have from
" those Sins, which I have indulged! How mon-
" strous,

" ſtrous, how heinous, how aggravated are the " Sins which I have been guilty of, and wilfully re- " peated, Times without Number! Alas! what will " become of me, if I ſtill go on in my evil Ways! " God be merciful to me a Sinner! a vile Sinner, a " moſt Hell-deſerving Sinner! And may ſuch a " one as I, hope for any Mercy? Is there a Way " for ſuch a Tranſgreſſor as I have been, to ob- " tain Pardon, and Peace, and Reconciliation with " the holy God, whom I have ſo much, and ſo " long offended?

" Yes, O my Soul! there is a ſure Way, even " for the Chief of Sinners, to obtain all that " Mercy, Salvation and Happineſs, which guilty " and wretched Creatures do want.

" The DECLARATIONS, the kind Declarations " of God which I have read in this Letter, and " which are recorded in the ſacred Scripture, are un- " deniable Proofs of it.

An ADDRESS to GOD.

" And now, O moſt gracious God, I humbly " praiſe and thank thee for them; I now renounce " all my Sins with Shame and Grief: I confeſs them " with a Loathing of them, and acknowledge that " thou mighteſt moſt juſtly deſtroy me. But, O " ſpare me for Chriſt's Sake! for thy Mercy Sake!

" I believe that the Lord *Jeſus* is both able and " willing to ſave even the Chief of Sinners, and ſuch " a vile Sinner as I have been. I believe him to be " the promiſed Saviour! Lord increaſe my Faith! " Help me againſt Unbelief! I take the Bleſſed Je- " ſus to be my Saviour, and humbly beſeech thee " by thy holy Spirit, thoroughly to convert, renew, " and ſanctify me! and do thou work continually " in me both to will, and to do of thy good Plea- " ſure!

" I now devote myſelf to thee, to be thine in an " everlaſting Covenant! I beſeech thee from this " Time to incline, and enable me to live according " to the holy Rules of thy Word." Amen, for Jeſus Chriſt his Sake.

Suitable Reflexions.

" O my Soul reflect upon it, and conſider the " wonderful Patience of God towards thee, in not " pouring out his Plagues upon thee, and ſending " thee down quick into Hell! Think on the Riches " of his Mercy manifeſted in giving thee this " Hour for renouncing thy Sins, and for accepting " the Saviour whom his Love provided; and think " on his Grace in helping thee, by his holy Spirit, " to return to him through Chriſt; and to truſt in " Chriſt Jeſus alone for Salvation.

" Happy Tranſaction, between God and my Soul " this Hour!

" If I had remained thoughtleſs, and inconſide- " rate, and perſiſted in my evil Ways, ſome de- " ſtroying Judgment might have put an End to my " Life while I was ſo doing; and then the impor- " tant Tranſaction could never, never be performed.

" But ſince I have been through Grace enabled to " accept of Chriſt, and am become one of his Diſ- " ciples; ſince I have devoted myſelf to God, and " renounced all my Tranſgreſſions, I have great " Reaſon to delight in God, as my God, and to re- " joice in Chriſt Jeſus, as being now my dear Lord, " Maſter, and Redeemer.

" And may well hope, that whatever Confuſions, " and Calamities may happen in this Country, or " City, my Condition for Eternity is ſafe, and will " be happy. Now I may lay aſide all Fears of " Death, even when the killing Arrows ſhall fall " thick around me.

" For

"For to a good Man, the Day of Death is better than the Day of his Birth, and when his Soul becomes absent from his Body, it will be present with the Lord, and the earthy House of this Tabernacle (*viz.* of his Body) shall be dissolved; he has *a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* 2 Cor. v. 1.

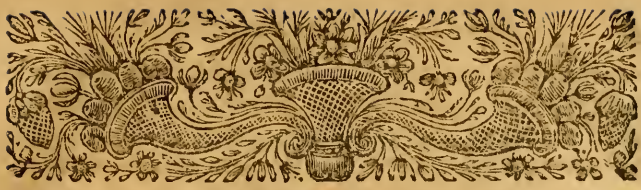
"And although in this World I may have Trouble, yet I may well hope for Peace in Christ Jesus; and therefore by the Help of the Holy Spirit I will continue seeking to, and trusting in the blessed Jesus, and endeavour faithfully to serve my God and Saviour to the utmost End of Life."

Thus may every one that repents of his Sins, and thankfully accepts of Christ to be his Saviour, and Lord, as he is freely offered to all Sorts of Sinners in the Gospel; thus, I say, may every such Person reason within himself, and be comforted.

I will only add, that it is my earnest Prayer for those who have hitherto been regardless of God, of an Interest in Christ and their Duty, and thoughtless of the Concerns of their immortal Souls, and hitherto walked in Ways of wilful Disobedience to the pure and holy Commandments of God, that they may by his Spirit have the foregoing Thoughts made their own, and their Souls inclined, and enabled to perform those Acts signified by the Expressions in the Address to God.

O merciful God! hear this Prayer, and grant these Petitions for Jesus Christ's Sake! and for the glorious Manifestation of the Energy and Sovereignty of thy Grace, and of the Riches of thy Love! Amen. And let every one that shall read these Papers say Amen.

F I N I S.



LETTER II.

TO THE

INHABITANTS of LONDON and WESTMINSTER, and all other Parts of GREAT-BRITAIN, &c.

I HAVE in my former Letter conſidered ſome of the *Declarations* of the Holy God, concerning *ſeven* Sorts of Perſons; Declarations, which ſignify that he has appointed them for ſuffering the fearful Effects of his Wrath in the Day of his Viſitation for Sin; and happy for them will it be, if they ſhall read; and ſeriouſly conſider what has been related; and if they ſhall without Delay repent of their Sins, and by a Faith unfeigned accept of Chriſt Jeſus, as their only Saviour, and join themſelves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant, never to be forgotten: Then will their State be ſafe for Eternity, then, in what Manner ſoever, and whenever Death ſhall happen to them, their Entrance into the inviſible World, the World of Spirits, and their Appearance before the more immediate, and glorious Preſence of God will be moſt joyful: Then they will be admitted to an inexpreſſibly more full Enjoyment of our God and Saviour, than any Saints ever had

on Earth; then they will be in the Company, and in Communion with the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apoſtles, and the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect; thoſe happy Souls, who would not be again in this Vale of Tears, in this Wilderneſs of Snares, expos'd to Temptations, Dangers, and Troubles, for ten thouſand Worlds: And even as to this World, as ſoon as ever a Sinner is convinced of his guilty and miſerable Condition by Nature, and Practice, and thereupon repents and believes in the Lord Jeſus, and is converted from his evil Ways, our merciful God is reconciled to him, forgives all his Iniquities, adopts him into the Number of his dear Children, and makes him an Heir of Heaven: The Almighty becomes his God in a Covenant Relation, and his Portion; and therefore, he may then have Peace, and Joy, whatever Vials of divine Wrath ſhall be poured out upon the Earth, for the Wickedneſs of thoſe who dwell in it.

Such pious Perſons may be comforted, and ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xlvi. 1, &c. *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very preſent Help in Trouble. Therefore will we not fear* (tho' dreadful Earthquakes happen, nay) *though the Earth be removed, and tho' the Mountains be carried into the midſt of the Sea, though the Waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the Mountains ſhake with the Swelling thereof: There is a River, the Streams whereof ſhall make glad the City of God* (there are ſuch Communications of Grace, Bleſſing, and Comfort, as ſhall make glad the Hearts of the Inhabitants of the City of God, the true Members of his Church) *God is in the midſt of her, ſhe ſhall not be moved, God ſhall help her* and that *right early. The LORD of Hoſts is with us, the God of Jacob is our Refuge.*

The Safety, the Comfort, and the Happineſs of thoſe, who through the divine Grace have an Intereſt in Chriſt, and which any others (who hitherto remain

main impenitent, unbelieving, and diſobedient) may yet obtain, ſhould excite all Sorts of Sinners to attend to whatever may be propoſed from the Word of God, in order to promote their Converſion to him, and excite them to fly from that fearful Wrath, which is coming apace on the Children of Diſobedience.

Indeed, they who have hitherto been regardleſs of God, and of a Saviour, and negligent of the Concerns of their never-dying Souls, and have lived in the allowed Practice of Sin, may well reaſon thus with themſelves, *viz.* "Since there is a God, an "Holy, and a Mighty God; ſince theſe Scriptures "called the BIBLE, contain the *Declarations* of his "Will, and ſince in thoſe ſacred Scriptures are re-"corded not only Promiſes of Bleſſings to thoſe who "know, and love, and ſerve the Lord; but like-"wiſe Threatnings of heavy Judgments againſt va-"rious SORTS of Perſons, who live in wilful Diſ-"obedience to his Laws, who provoke his Anger, "and continue to do ſo; I will no longer be ſtupid, "and thoughtleſs, but will read the *Declarations* of "the Righteous God, and obſerve whether I am in "one or other of thoſe Sorts of Perſons, whom he "has marked out for ſuffering Puniſhment in a time "of general Calamity, in the time when Multitudes "will be deſtroyed by divine Judgments: And "now, O moſt merciful God, I humbly beſeech "thee to help me to read thy Threatnings with "Attention, and do thou ſo impreſs my Mind by "thy holy Word, that I may not only know the "Evils threatned againſt ſtubborn Tranſgreſſors of "thy Laws, but be inclined, and enabled to follow "the Directions of thy Word, for gaining thy "Favour, and the Salvation I want."

I wiſh that ſuch a Diſpoſition of Mind, as is ſignified by the foregoing Expreſſions, was in every ir-

religious Perſon, that ſhall take this Letter into his Hands.

There are ſeveral Sorts of Perſons, who live in wilful Diſobedience to one or other of the *ſix* laſt of the Ten Commandments, and who are Objects of tremendous *Declarations* upon Record in the Sacred Scriptures, and it greatly concerneth ſuch to conſider what the Lord hath ſpoken of them.

And therefore I proceed to take theſe into Conſideration, *viz.*

VIII. Rebellious *Perſons.* Theſe are another Sort under the Threatnings of the Holy God.

Rebellion is a wilful Oppoſition to the Authority, and lawful Commands of *natural*, or *ſpiritual*, or *civil* Parents.

It is God's Ordinance that natural Parents ſhall have Authority, and a Right of ruling, and commanding their Children; and that thoſe whom God has ſet among his People as ſpiritual Guides, and Teachers of his Word, of his Doctrines and Precepts, ſhall have Authority to inſtruct the People in them, and to require them to believe his Doctrines, and to obey his Precepts; and likewiſe, it is the Will of God that Kings, and ſubordinate Magiſtrates, ſhall have Authority over their Subjects to Command Obedience to thoſe Laws which are conſiſtent with the divine Precepts, and for the Good of the Community.

As to natural Parents, The Moral Law of God, a Law in all Nations, and in all Ages of equal Force: This Law ſays, *Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy Days may be long upon the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*, Exod. xx. 12. in *Epheſ.* vi. 1, 2, 3. it is written, *Children obey your Parents in the Lord: For this is right. Honour thy Father and thy Mother (which is the firſt Commandment*

mandment with Promiſe) that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayeſt live long on the Earth.

The Honour, and Obedience, which God requires Children to render to their Parents, ſhou'd chearfully be performed by them, as a Part of that Conformity, which they owe to the divine Precepts, (God having appointed their Parents to be their Teachers, Guides, and Governors) and as ſome Return (tho' not equivalent) to the Obligations they are under for their Lives, their Maintenance, their Education, and for the tender Care of them under Sickneſſes, and other Afflictions, and Troubles, and for their Expences, and Diligence to introduce them into a comfortable Way of Subſiſtence for themſelves, and new Families, when they are grown up to ſettle in the World.

But if Children are refractory, and diſobedient, if they come to deſpiſe, and miſtreat their Parents, and inſtead of adminiſtring Comfort to them, they bring Diſgrace upon them, and occaſion heart-breaking Sorrows, and Griefs unto them; they ſubvert the Order, God has eſtabliſhed, they throw the Families to which they belong into Confuſion, they are found in the Number of the Rebellious, and greatly provoke the Wrath of the Almighty, and are among *rebellious* Perſons.

The alwiſe, and righteous God pronounces ſuch Children *rebellious*, and commanded that they ſhou'd be put to death. In *Deut.* xxi. 18, 19. the ſupreme Lawgiver ſaid, *If a Man has a ſtubborn, and rebellious Son, which will not obey the Voice of his Father, or the Voice of his Mother, and* that *when they have chaſten'd him, will not hearken unto them: Then ſhall his Father and his Mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the Elders of his City, and unto the Gates of his Place: And they ſhall ſay unto the Elders of his City, This our Son is ſtubborn, and rebellious, he will not obey our Voice, he is a Glutton, and a Drunkard.*

And

And all the Men of his City, ſhall ſtone him with Stones, that he die: So ſhalt thou put away Evil from among you, and all Iſrael ſhall hear, and fear.

It appears from theſe Paſſages that a Courſe of wilful Diſobedience to Parents, was by God's Appointment a capital Crime, a Crime to be puniſhed with Death: And that altho' the Puniſhment has not for many Ages been inflicted by Men, and Children on this Account are more fearleſs of being guilty of the Crime, God is nevertheleſs provoked, and it may be reaſonably apprehended (tho' the guilty are ſuffered to eſcape Puniſhment among Men) that God will not ſuffer them to eſcape, when he viſits a Land for the Iniquities of thoſe that dwell in it.

As for thoſe whom God has appointed to be ſpiritual Guides to his People, Teachers, and Miniſters of his Word, we have the following Laws to direct our Behaviour towards them, *viz.*

In *Theſſ.* v. 12, 13. where St. *Paul* ſays, *We beſeech you Brethren, to know them, which labour among you, and are over you in the* Lord, *and admoniſh you; and to eſteem them very highly in Love for their Works Sake.*

In *Heb.* xiii. 7. it is written, *Remember them which have the Rule over you, who have ſpoken unto you the Word of God: Whoſe Faith follow, conſidering the End of their Converſation.* And in the 17th Verſe of that Chapter it is ſaid, *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves: For they watch for your Souls, as they that muſt give Account, that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief: For that is unprofitable for you.*

Theſe divine Precepts teach us the following Particulars, *viz.* 1. That it is our Duty to reſpect, and love the Miniſters of the Goſpel, and to become acquainted with thoſe of them whoſe Labours we attend. 2. That ſo far as they deliver to us the

Word

Word of God, it is our Duty to receive it, and to be obedient to it: But it is our Duty alſo to examine every Doctrine they teach, and every Inſtruction, which (as a Matter of Practice incumbent on us) they inculcate: We are, I ſay, to examine them by the ſacred Scriptures, and not to receive them merely becauſe delivered by our Teachers.

The Word of the Lord plainly ſhews, he would have us to take this Courſe.

When our bleſſed Saviour preached to the *Jews*, he directed, and commanded them to *ſearch the Scriptures*, ſee *John* v. 29. he appealed to thoſe ſacred Writings as a Proof of the Verity of his Doctrine, ſaying, *they, are they which teſtify of me.*

The Commendation given of the *Bereans*, (*Acts* xvii. 11.) on the Account that *they ſearched the Scriptures daily* (to know) *whether thoſe Things* (the Apoſtle preached) *were ſo*; that is, were according to them, is an Evidence that God wou'd have us to examine by the Scriptures, the Things we hear preached.

And our doing this is a Matter of Importance, as we may reaſonably conclude from the Injunction which Chriſt gives to all People, *Mark* iv. 24. *Take heed what you hear.* This Precept imports, that it is the Duty of every one, that hears, to examine by the Scriptures what is ſpoken, and thereby to judge, whether it is true, and fit to be received, or not.

Further, That we are thus obliged, appears from *Iſa.* viii. 19, 20. in the 19th Verſe the Prophet ſhews the People, that they ought not to be influenced by thoſe, who would perſuade them to ſeek for Inſtruction and Direction to them that have familiar Spirits, but ſhou'd apply themſelves to God, and his Word, if they wou'd know his Will, and their own Duty. *Shou'd not a People ſeek unto their God? To the Law, and to the Teſtimony:* If they (if Men, or Angels from Heaven) *ſpeak not according*

to

to this Word (the Word of the Lord delivered by his Servants the Prophets) it is *becauſe* there is *no Light* (or Truth) *in them.*

And again, 1 *John* iv. 1. it is ſaid, *Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they are of God: Becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the World.*

But if any People ſhall oppoſe, or obſtruct the Miniſters of the Goſpel in the faithful Performance of their Office, and in preaching, not their own private Opinion, but the Word of God, they are guilty of an heinous Sin, and hinder the Succeſs of the Goſpel Miniſtry, and greatly provoke God; and altho' they may not be liable to Puniſhment from Men, yet they have Reaſon to fear the the Effects of the divine Diſpleaſure, when the Judgments of the Almighty are brought on a Land for the Iniquities of the People.

As for *Kings* and ſubordinate *Magiſtrates*, God by his Law requires thoſe under their Authority to honour, and to obey them.

Kings, and Queens may be conſidered as political, or civil Parents. *Kings ſhall be thy Nurſing-fathers, and their Queens thy Nurſing-mothers*, it is ſaid in *Iſaiah* xlix. 23.

The great God has ſaid, *Honour the King* (1 Pet. ii. 17.) I counſel thee *to keep the King's Commandment*, and that, *in Regard of the Oath of God.* (It is written in *Eccles.* viii. 2.) *That firſt of all, Supplications, Prayers, Interceſſions, and giving of Thanks be made for all Men: For Kings, and for all that are in Authority*, that we may lead a *quiet and peaceable Life in all Godlineſs and Honeſty. For this is good, and acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour.* (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3.) *Curſe not the King, no not in thy Thought.* Eccles x. 21. Thou ſhalt not revile the Gods (the *Judges*, as the Word is tranſlated in the Margin) *nor curſe the Ruler of thy People*, (Exod. xxii. 28.)

The

The holy God by his Apoſtle ſays, *Let every Soul be ſubject unto the higher Powers. For there is no Power but of God: The Powers that be, are ordained of God. Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the Power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God: And they that reſiſt, ſhall receive unto themſelves Damnation.* Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

And therefore, they who refuſe due Honour and Obedience to the lawful Magiſtrate, have Reaſon to be afraid of the divine Wrath in the Day when God viſits a Land for the Iniquities of the Inhabitants. The Apoſtle adds, *Wilt thou not then be afraid of the Power*, &c. *Ye muſt needs be ſubject not only for Wrath, but alſo for Conſcience Sake. For, for this Cauſe, pay you Tribute alſo; for they are God's Miniſters*, &c. Render therefore unto all their Dues: *Tribute, to whom Tribute* is due, *Cuſtom, to whom Cuſtom, Fear, to whom Fear, Honour, to whom Honour.* See *Rom.* xiii. 3, 5, 7.

It is a Charge committed to the Miniſters of the Word of God to teach the People the Duty they owe to their civil Governours; in *Tit.* iii. 1. *Put them in mind to be ſubject to Principalities, and Powers, and to obey Magiſtrates.*

And the divine Law ſays to the People, *Submit yourſelves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake: Whether it be to the King, as Supreme; or unto Governours, as unto them that are ſent by him for the Puniſhment of evil Doers, and for the Praiſe of them that do well.* 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.

Fear thou the LORD, *and the King: And meddle not with them that are given to Change. For their Calamities ſhall riſe ſuddenly, and who knoweth the Ruin of them both.* See *Prov.* xxiv. 21, 22.

It may well be obſerved, that thoſe who reſiſt Magiſtrates in the right Exerciſe of their Authorities, and rebel againſt their lawful Governours, not only expoſe themſelves to eternal Damnation in the next

World, but bring upon themſelves, and their Families, Ruin, and Deſtruction in this.

It appears from the Hiſtory of Nations, and Kingdoms that Multitudes of Perſons, and Families, have been ruined and deſtroyed for the Sin of *Rebellion* againſt their lawful Governours.

The Conſideration hereof ſhou'd reſtrain all People from oppoſing either the juſt authority of their King, or of the ſubordinate Magiſtrates.

IX. Oppressors are another Sort of Perſons, who have Reaſon to fear the Effects of God's Wrath in the Day of his Viſitation for Sin.

As Rebellion includes in it the various Sorts of Miſbehaviour, and Oppoſition of Inferiors to their Superiors in Authority; ſo Oppression comprehends the ſeveral Abuſes, which *Superiors* in Authority, or Power, are guilty of towards their Inferiors.

When they exact from Perſons ſubject to them Contributions, or bodily Labours, which are not due, or when they reſtrain their natural Liberties, without legal Authority, or Reaſon, they are Oppreſſors, and may be reckon'd among the Tranſgreſſors of the *fifth* Commandment, which muſt be underſtood not only as obliging Inferiours to the Performance of the Duties they owe to their natural, ſpiritual, and civil Parents, to all in Authority over them, and to forbid every Thing that is inconſiſtent with the Practice of thoſe Duties, ſo very reaſonably it ſhou'd be underſtood to oblige all in Authority, and Power, faithfully to diſcharge the Duties they owe to thoſe who are ſubject to them, and likewiſe to forbid every Thing that is inconſiſtent therewith, and conſequently to forbid Oppreſſion.

The Nature of the Sin of Oppreſſion, according to the Account of it in Holy Scriptures, will be evident, if we conſider *Exod.* iii. 7, 9. *The Lord ſaid, I have ſurely ſeen the Affliction of my People, which are in* Egypt, *and have heard their Cry, by Reaſon of Taſk-Maſters,*

Maſters, for I know their Sorrows.—And *I have alſo ſeen the Oppreſſion, wherewith the* Egyptians *oppreſs them.*

The Oppreſſion, which *Pharaoh*, and his People were guilty of towards the *Iſraelites*, was the requiring of them unreaſonable Labours, and ſetting *over them Taſk-Maſters, to afflict them with their Burdens*, Exod. i. 11.

But this Abuſe of Authority, and Power, this Miſtreatment, Tyranny, and Cruelty towards Inferiors is very provoking to the merciful God.

It is an Iniquity which God has threatened terribly to puniſh. In *Iſa.* xlix. 20. God ſays to his People, *I will feed them that oppreſs thee with their own Fleſh, and they ſhall be drunken with their own Blood, as with ſweet Wine*, and in *Jer.* xxx. 26. the Almighty ſays *I will puniſh all that oppreſs them.*

Thus ſpeaketh the Lord of Hoſts, ſaying, Execute true Judgment, and ſhew Mercy, and Compaſſion, every Man to his Brother. And oppreſs not the Widow, nor the Fatherleſs, nor the Stranger, nor the Poor, and let none of you imagine Evil againſt his Brother, in your Heart. Zech. vii. 9, 10.

I will be a ſwift Witneſs—againſt thoſe that oppreſs the Hireling in his Wages, the Widow, and the Fatherleſs, and that turn aſide the Stranger from his Right, *and fear not me, ſaith the* LORD *of Hoſts.* Mal. iii. 5.

If Parents treat their Children with unreaſonable Severity, and withold from them, what, according to their Rank, and Circumſtances in Life, and the Occaſions of the Children, ſhould be allowed them, they are guilty of the Sin of Oppreſſion.

If Maſters make their Servants to ſerve with Rigour, and by exacting unreaſonable Labours, or by not allowing them Food convenient in ſufficient Quantity, they imbitter their Lives, they are alſo guilty of Oppreſſion.

If Men of Riches, or Power, bear hard on their Inferiors, retrench the Liberties they have a Right unto, or put them unreaſonably to Trouble, they are guilty of Oppreſſion. St. *James* ſaid, *Do not rich Men oppreſs you, and draw you before the Judgment-Seats?* James ii. 6.

But the LORD *will be a Refuge for the oppreſſed*, Pſal. ix. 9. *Thus ſaith the* LORD, *execute Judgment in the Morning, and deliver* him that is *ſpoiled out of the Hand of the Oppreſſor, leſt my Fury go out like Fire, and burn that none can quench* it, *becauſe of the Evil of your Doings*, Jer. xxi. 12.

As theſe Words ſhew the Indignation of the righteous God againſt thoſe who can, and will not deliver the Oppreſſed from their Oppreſſors, ſo they manifeſt that the Wrath of almighty God is greatly provoked by the Iniquity, and Cruelty of Oppreſſors; and that ſuch unmerciful Perſons have Reaſon to expect Puniſhment, not only hereafter, but even in this World, when the righteous God viſits a People for their Sins. *For he ſhall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath ſhewed no Mercy:* Saith the Word of the Lord, *James* ii. 13.

X. MURDERERS muſt be reckoned one Sort of Perſons appointed to ſuffer the Vengeance of God both in this World, and the next.

He is a Murderer, that deſignedly, and maliciouſly takes away the Life of another, and he is a Tranſgreſſor of the ſixth Commandment, which ſays, *Thou ſhalt not kill*, Exod. xx. 13.

And the juſt God has appointed that all ſuch ſhall be put to death. *Whoſo ſheddeth Man's Blood, by Man ſhall his Blood be ſhed*, ſaid the ſovereign Lord of Life and Death. *Gen.* ix. 6. *He that ſmiteth a Man ſo that he die, ſhall ſurely be put to Death*, Exod. xxi. 13. *If a Man come preſumptuouſly upon his Neighbour, to ſlay him with Guile, thou ſhalt take him from mine Altar, that he may die*, ſays God, *Exod.* xxi. 13,

13, 14. In *Numb.* xxi. 13. the Almighty ſays, *Ye ſhall take no Satisfaction for the Life of a Murderer, which is guilty of Death: But he ſhall ſurely be put to Death.*

The Conſideration of theſe Laws ſhould deter all Men from the Crime of *Duelling*.

There is no DUEL fought, but one of the Parties gives the Challenge; and the Occaſion of it is ſome Injury, ſome Provocation either imaginary, or real.

Oftentimes it is imaginary, ſome Words or Behaviour of the Perſon challenged, miſrepreſented, or miſunderſtood; and a cool Inquiry into the Caſe, would prevent a Quarrel, and confirm a Friendſhip.

But ſuppoſe the *Challenger* has indeed been miſtreated, and ſuffered a real Injury, the Laws of God, and of the Land have provided a Remedy, and the Law is open to be uſed for obtaining Juſtice to one, any Way really injured.

The injured Perſon muſt not murder the Man that has offended him; ſuch a cruel Action, is a ſubverting, in that Caſe, all the Laws, divine, and human, made to prevent ſo heinous a Crime.

And what is the Apology for his wicked Challenge? Is it that his Innocence of ſomething he has been falſely accuſed of may be vindicated, and made manifeſt?

This is beſt done in an open Court of civil Judicature, where the real State of Things may become evident by the Teſtimony of Witneſſes on both Sides. But his Innocence can never be cleared by his endeavouring to kill, and murder the Perſon that has falſely accuſed him, nor by his expoſing himſelf to be murdered by the other. And the true State of the Caſe between the *Duellers* after their Battle, may continue to the Publick, in as much Darkneſs and Uncertainty as before, becauſe of the different Accounts of it by the Friends of each Party.

Or, is the Reaſon of the Challenge to get Satisfaction

faction for the Affront, or Injury done him? But what Satisfaction can it be for a Man needlesly, and wickedly to expose himself to be murder'd by the Man, whom he challenges.

If the Satisfaction meant is the Gratification of a malicious Desire of taking Revenge by a wilful shedding the Blood of his Neighbour, of his Brother who has offended him, it is a wicked Satisfaction, and greatly to be abhorred; and the Desire of it ought to be contradicted: The gratifying such a Desire is an Act of Rebellion against the divine Authority, which says, *Thou shalt not kill*, Exod. xx. and which has also said, *Avenge not yourselves*, Rom. xii. 19.

And as to the *Challenged*, what is his Apology for his wicked Acceptance of the Challenge? Is it that he shall be esteemed a *Coward*, *a Man of no Courage*, if he does not accept it? Be it so, yet better for him that unreasonable Men think so, than for him (in direct Opposition to the Will, and Law of the great God) violently, and maliciously to take away the Life of another, or thus unjustifiably to expose his own.

In the Case of a Duel, the *Challenger*, and the *Challenged* (according to their Appointment) meet at the Place fixed upon; they meet each of them with a premeditated, and malicious Design to kill, and to murder the other, in Defiance of the Authority of that God who made them both, who commands them to love each other, and to promote each others Safety and Good, and if they did so, they would find true Honour, Peace, and Comfort. But what a shameful, horrid Tragedy do they act by their Duelling.

Let the Case be rightly considered both as to the Person killing, and the Person killed: The Person killing is a Murderer with his Hands, and Heart, and the Character of being a *Murderer* will always most

moſt juſtly belong to him: And if he truly repents, the beſt that can be ſaid of him is, that he is a Penitent Murderer. But there remains an indelible Stain in his Character; it can never be ſaid of ſuch a Man, that he never was a Murderer. And will the Character of being a Man of Courage compenſate the juſt Shame, Diſgrace, and Guilt of being a Murderer?

It ſhould likewiſe be conſidered whether the Perſon kill'd was fit for Death; if not, the Murderer forced his Appearance before God, to be ſent down among the accurſed Spirits, to be reſerved to the Judgment of the great Day.

The Murderer puts a Period to his Space for Repentance, to his Opportunity of ſeeking Peace with God, and eternal Salvation. Thus it is with the Perſon killing.

O the miſerable Conſequences of Duelling!

And then as to the Perſon killed; he had Murder in his Heart, and no Space to repent of it. Duellers take the moſt effectual Courſe to render their everlaſting Damnation, Shame, and Torment inevitable.

Theſe ſix Things doth the LORD hate, yea ſeven are Abomination unto him: A proud Look, a lying Tongue, and Hands that ſhed innocent Blood, Prov. vi. 16, 17.

The Prophet *Hoſea*, ſaid (Hoſ. iv. 3, 4.) *By Swearing, and Lying, and Killing, and Stealing, and committing Adultery, they break out, and Blood toucheth Blood. Therefore ſhall the Land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein ſhall languiſh with the Beaſts of the Field, and the Fowls of Heaven; yea the Fiſhes of the Sea alſo ſhall be taken away.*

The righteous Providence of God often has in a moſt remarkable Manner diſcovered Murderers, and brought them quickly to ſuffer Death by the

Sentence of the Magiſtrate, according to the divine Law.

And although he may permit ſome of them for a while to remain undiſcovered, yet in the Day of his Viſitation for Sin, when he ſhall make Inquiſition for Blood, they may be ſure he will remember them, and they have Reaſon to fear that he will deal with them according to their Blood-guiltineſs.

XI. Drunkards, *Gluttons*, and *riotous* Livers, are another Sort of Perſons, againſt whom terrible Threatnings of God are recorded in the holy Scriptures.

Theſe likewiſe are Tranſgreſſors of the *ſixth* Commandment, as by their Intemperance, and frequent Exceſſes, they impair their own Health, and ſhorten their Lives; that is, put an End to them as certainly, as if they thruſt themſelves through with a Sword, though not in ſo ſpeedy a Manner.

And then by importuning their Companions to eat, or to drink to Exceſs, or to indulge themſelves in any Pleaſure inconſiſtent with Health, they are inſtrumental in deſtroying their Health, and haſtening their Death.

But what ſaith the Word of God concerning ſuch as theſe? In Iſa. xxviii. 1, 3. it ſays, *Wo to the Drunkards of Ephraim, the Drunkards of Ephraim ſhall be trodden under Feet.*

In Prov. xxiii. 21. it is declared, that *the Drunkard, and the Glutton ſhall come to Poverty*; and there are frequent Inſtances of this.

In Joel i. 5. God by his Prophet ſays, *Awake ye Drunkards, and Weep, and howl all ye Drinkers of Wine.*

The Prophet *Nahum* ſaid, *The Lord is good, a ſtrong Hold in the Day of Trouble* (i. e. to thoſe who love and ſerve him) *and he knoweth them that truſt in him. But with an overflowing Flood, he will make*

an

an utter End of the Place thereof, and Darkneſs ſhall purſue his Enemies. What do ye imagine againſt the LORD? He will make an utter End: Affliction ſhall not riſe up the ſecond Time. For while they be folden together as Thorns, and while they are drunken as Drunkards, they ſhall be devoured as Stubble fully dry, Nahum i. 7, 8, 9, 10.

In Iſa. v. 11—14. it is ſaid, *Wo unto them that riſe up early in the Morning, that they may follow ſtrong Drink, that continue until Night till Wine inflame them. And the Harp, and the Viol, the Tabret, and the Pipe, and Wine*, are in *their Feaſts: But they regard not the Work of the LORD, neither conſider the Operation of his Hands. Therefore my People are gone into Captivity, becauſe they have no Knowledge, and their honourable Men are famiſhed, and their Multitudes dried up with Thirſt. Therefore Hell hath enlarged herſelf, and opened her Mouth without Meaſure: And their Glory, and their Multitude, and their Pomp, and he that rejoiceth ſhall deſcend into it.* In Verſe 22. it is added, *Wo unto* them that are *mighty to drink Wine, and Men of ſtrength to mingle ſtrong Drink*, i. e. if they abuſe their Strength by drinking to Exceſs, and that is Exceſs, which is more than needful to the healthful Nouriſhment, and Chearfulneſs of the Body.

The Prophet further adds, in Verſe 25. *Therefore is the Anger of the LORD kindled againſt his People, and he hath ſtretched forth his Hands againſt them, and hath ſmitten them: And the Hills did tremble, and* their *Carcaſſes were torn in the midſt of the Streets: For all this his Anger is not turned away, but his Hand is ſtretched out ſtill.*

Theſe, and ſuch like *Declarations* do plainly ſhew, that they who indulge their Appetites with Exceſſes in Meats and Drinks, and they who perſuade, and tempt others to do ſo, have Reaſon to fear the

Judgments of the Holy God, when he is viſiting for Sin.

But how much ſoever they may ſuffer by common Calamities in this World, theſe Sufferings will be to them only the Beginnings of Sorrows, unleſs they repent, and amend their Ways. For *Drunkards ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God*, See 1 Cor. vi. 10.

It is our bleſſed Redeemer, who ſaid, *Take heed to yourſelves, leſt at any time, your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenneſs, and the Cares of this Life, and ſo that Day come upon you unawares. For as a Snare ſhall it come on all them that dwell on the Face of the whole Earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe* (terrible) *Things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of Man*, Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36.

The *Things* which Chriſt refers to, and which he in that Chapter foretold ſhould come to paſs, were that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be compaſſed with Armies, and Deſolation, Verſe 20. He foretold its *Days of Vengeance*, Verſe 22. and that there ſhould be great Diſtreſs in the Land, and Wrath upon the People, Verſe 23. And that they ſhould fall by the Edge of the Sword, Verſe 24. That upon the Earth ſhould be Diſtreſs of Nations with Perplexity, Verſe 25. Men's Hearts failing them for Fear, and for looking after thoſe Things, which are coming on the Earth, Verſe 26.

And thus it happened to the Jews, when the juſt God brought upon them the Day of his Wrath, the Day of his Viſiting them for their Iniquities. And in like manner it will happen to other Nations, when the Almighty ſhall come forth in Judgment againſt them, and make a ſinful incorrigible People to ſee, and feel the Miſeries of the Days of his Vengeance.

Therefore,

Therefore, *Let us walk honeſtly, as in the Day; not in Rioting and Drunkenneſs, not in Chambering and Wantonneſs, not in Strife and Envying. But put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and make not Proviſion for the Fleſh, to fulfil the Luſts thereof.* Rom. xiii. 13, 14.

XII. Unclean Persons, Whoremongers and Adulterers, are another Sort, on whom God has denounced deſtroying Judgments.

Theſe are Tranſgreſſors of the *ſeventh* Commandment.

Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge, &c. It is declared, Heb. xiii. 4. and in Galat. v. 19, 21. it is ſaid, *Now the Works of the Fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs*; and it is added, *That they who do ſuch Things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

In Epheſ. v. 3, 4, 5, 6. *But Fornication and all Uncleanneſs, let it not be once named amongſt you, as becometh Saints. Neither Filthineſs nor fooliſh Talking, nor Jeſting which are not convenient: But rather giving of Thanks. For this you know that no Whoremonger nor unclean Perſon — hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt, and of God — for becauſe of theſe Things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Diſobedience.*

What the Holy God has ſaid concerning the Jews, in *Jer.* v. 7, 8, 9. ſhews evidently that this Sort of Sinners are appointed to ſuffer in the Day of his Viſitation. The LORD ſaid, *When I fed them to the full they committed Adultery, and aſſembled themſelves by Troops in the Harlots Houſes. They were as fed Horſes in the Morning: Every one neighed after his Neighbour's Wife: Shall I not viſit for theſe Things? ſaith the LORD, ſhall not my Soul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?*

The Prophet *Ezekiel* alſo, reckoning up ſeveral Sorts of Tranſgreſſors of the divine Law in *Jeruſalem*, ſays, *One hath committed Abomination with his Neighbour's Wife, and another has lewdly defiled his Daughter-in-Law, and another in thee hath humbled his Siſter, his Father's Daughter*, Ezek. xxii.

It muſt be obſerved, that *Self-Pollution*, the Sin for which the Holy God ſlew *Onan*, *Gen.* xxxviii. 9, 10. is a Sort of Uncleanneſs very heinous in its Nature. And likewiſe that the unnatural Luſts of the *Sodomites*, Gen. xix. 5. for which *the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, Brimſtone and Fire from the Lord out of Heaven, and overthrew their Cities, and all the Plain, and all the Inhabitants of the Cities, and that which grew upon the Ground*, Gen. xix. 24, 25. I ſay, thoſe unnatural Luſts are Kinds of Filthineſs which cry loudly for divine Vengeance to be inflicted on the Guilty: And it is Matter of great Lamentation, that notwithſtanding the fearful, and utter Deſtruction of thoſe Cities for the Crimes of their Inhabitants, there have been in the ſucceeding Ages, Perſons guilty of the ſame monſtrous and filthy Practices.

St. *Paul* ſpeaketh of ſuch in Rom. i. 26, 27. ſaying, *For this Cauſe God gave them up unto vile Affections: For even their Women did change their natural Uſe unto that which is againſt Nature: And likewiſe alſo the Men, leaving the natural Uſe of Women, burned in their Luſt, one toward another, Men with Men, working that which is unſeemly, and receiving in themſelves that Recompence of their Error which was meet.*

The Sins of theſe monſtrous Tranſgreſſors, indeed, are ſecret, they are Deeds of Darkneſs, but the righteous God may openly take Vengeance on them, in the Day of his Viſitation for Sin. Such have no Reaſon to hope they ſhall eſcape the deſtroying Wrath of the Almighty God.

And

And as the Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem* were incorrigible, and did not repent of their Iniquities, the Holy God according to his Threatnings, inflicted on them deſtroying Judgments. See *Jer.* v. 31. where he ſays, *Therefore have I poured out mine Indignation upon them, I have conſumed them with the Fire of my Wrath: Their own Way have I recompenſed upon their Heads, ſaith the LORD GOD.*

I may add, that Perſons under the like Guilt, have Reaſon to expect like Puniſhment; and therefore have Cauſe to be afraid of God's proceeding in the Way of his Judgments.

And happy for them will it be, if the Whoremongers and Adulterers; happy will it be, if all the filthy, the unchaſte, the unclean Perſons of both Sexes, ſhall conſider the Evil of their Ways, and the *Declarations* of the Holy God againſt them; if they ſhall repent of their Sins, and ſeek the Forgiveneſs of them, and Peace with God through Chriſt Jeſus, before the Viols of his Wrath be poured out upon them.

XIII. Unjust Perſons, are another Sort againſt whom deſtroying Judgments are denounced in the Word of God.

Unjust *Perſons* are all they, who either by Force, or Fraud, take, or with-hold to their own Uſe any Thing that is the Property of another.

Theſe all are Tranſgreſſors of the *eighth* Commandment.

This Claſs includes not only Thieves of every Denomination, but alſo *Extortioners*, and *fraudulent Dealers* with unjuſt Weights and Meaſures.

Extortioners are thoſe Perſons who take Advantage from the Neceſſities, or Ignorance of others, to conſtrain them to give more Money for the Things they buy, than is the Market-price, or to perform

perform more Labour for Wages than is usual according to the Custom of the Country, thus, *e. g.*

If the Sellers of any Commodity know the Buyers to be under a Necessity of getting the Things they treat about, and that they can have them no where else, or that they are ignorant of the Value, and Market-price of them, and therefore exact from them a greater Price than they are worth, or than the Sellers would insist on, if the Buyers were not under such Necessity, or such Ignorance, they are guilty of Extortion.

And if any Manufacturers, as a Method of Gain to themselves, shall keep for Sale to their Work-People, various Sorts of Goods, they at Times have Occasion for, and shall oblige them to buy such Goods, when they do not want the Goods but the Money for other Uses, they are Extortioners.

These two Sorts of Persons are guilty of Transgressing that divine Law, which says, *All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them*, Matt. vii. 12. which implies, that *All Things* whatsoever we would that Men should *not* do to us, we should *not*, we ought *not* to do to them.

Thus God has manifested his holy Will concerning our Conduct and manner of Dealing with others. And the *Extortioners* above-mentioned, would not like to be themselves treated in such Manner as they treat others.

I must add, that their Crime is abominable in the Sight of God, who delights in Mercy and Goodness.

Let such Transgressors read, and consider what is said in *Ezek.* xxii. 12, 13, 14. *Thou hast greedily gained of thy Neighbours by Extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the LORD GOD. Behold, therefore I have smitten mine Hand at thy dishonest Gain, which thou hast made——Can thine Heart endure, or can thine*

thine Hands be ſtrong, *in the Days that I ſhall deal with thee? I the LORD have ſpoken it, and will do it.*

Theſe *Declarations* ſhew that God will deal with Extortioners in the Days of his Viſitation for Sin; and that their Hearts will not be able to endure the Tokens of his Wrath, or to ſuſtain the ſtrokes of his Vengeance.

There is another Sort of EXTORTION, cruel in its Nature, and abominable in the Eyes of the Lord; that is, when *Manufacturers* or others conſtrain the People they employ to labour for leſs Wages, than Cuſtom, or particular Agreement has made their Due, or exact from them more Work than is uſually done for the cuſtomary Wages; or on ſome unreaſonable Pretence with-hold from them Part of their Wages.

Theſe may be ſaid to grind the Face of the Poor: They oppreſs the Hirelings, the People they employ to labour, and the Character of Extortioners juſtly belongs to them.

Let ſuch conſider the Import of this Declaration in *Mal.* iii. 5. *I will come near to you to Judgment, and I will be a ſwift Witneſs—againſt thoſe that oppreſs the Hireling in his Wages—and fear not, ſaith the LORD of Hoſts.*

And in *James* v. 4. it is ſaid, *Behold the Hire of the Labourers, which have reaped down your Fields, which is of you kept back by Fraud, crieth; and the Cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the Ears of the Lord of Sabaoth,* who will deal with ſuch Oppreſſors, and take Vengeance on them when he viſits for Sin.

In *Levit.* xix. 13. it is ſaid, *The Wages of him that is hired, ſhall not abide with thee all Night until the Morning.*

In *Deut.* xxiv. 15. it is written, *At his Day thou ſhalt give him his Hire, neither ſhall the Sun go down*

upon

upon it, for he is poor, and ſetteth his Heart upon it: leſt he cry againſt thee unto the Lord, and it be Sin unto thee.

In *Levit.* xix. 9. are recorded the following Laws, *viz. When you reap the Harveſt of your Land, thou ſhalt not wholly reap the Corners of thy Field, neither ſhalt thou gather the Gleanings of thy Harveſt. And thou ſhalt not glean thy Vineyard, neither ſhalt thou gather every Grape of thy Vineyard, thou ſhalt leave them for the Poor, and Stranger: I am the Lord your God.* Signifying that the great God has compaſſion for the Poor, and Strangers, and approves all Acts of Kindneſs done unto them; and that he is both able, and willing to recompence with his Bleſſings, thoſe who obey his Will, by leaving in the Time of Harveſt, and Gathering of Fruit, Gleanings of their Harveſt, and of the Fruit for the Poor.

In *Deut.* xxiv. 19. it is likewiſe enacted, by the ſupreme Governor of the World, thus, *viz. When thou cutteſt down thine Harveſt in thy Field, and haſt forgot a Sheaf in the Field, thou ſhalt not go again to fetch it: It ſhall be for the Stranger, for the Fatherleſs and the Widow: That the LORD thy God may bleſs thee in all the Work of thine Hands. When thou beateſt thine Olive-tree, thou ſhalt not go over the Boughs again: It ſhall be for the Stranger, for the Fatherleſs, and for the Widow.*

I have mentioned theſe Laws of our good God, becauſe they manifeſt his gracious Care for Strangers, and for the Fatherleſs, and for Widows in needy Circumſtances; and becauſe they are Laws always obligatory, they are divine Laws always binding all Perſons, in all Ages, who are concerned in Huſbandry, in Sowing, in Reaping, in Raiſing, and Gathering-in the Fruits of the Earth. We ought to think, and acknowledge that they are Laws ſtill in

in Force, ſince God never repealed them, ſince neither Men, nor Angels, can annul the Obligations of his Commandments, and ſince divers Reaſons of them, *viz.* the Wants of the Poor, and the Supply, and the Comfort they will have by Means of a due Obedience to thoſe Laws: And I apprehended it the more needful to recite them, becauſe many *Landholders*, *Farmers*, and *Poſſeſſors of Vineyards*, and *Olive Yards*, and others employed in raiſing and propagating the Fruits of the Earth are ignorant of them.

I muſt add one *Declaration* more, *viz.* that in 1 *Cor.* vi. 10. *Nor Thieves, nor Covetous — nor Extortioners ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God.* Therefore we may reaſonably conclude, that this hard-hearted and cruel ſort of Sinners, are obnoxious to the deſtroying Judgments of God, when he is viſiting an ungodly Nation for their Iniquities.

I have further to obſerve, that *fraudulent Dealers*, with *unjuſt Weights* and *Meaſures*, muſt be reckoned among the Tranſgreſſors of the *eighth* Commandment, becauſe by their Frauds they get ſo much of the Buyer's Money unjuſtly, as the diminiſhed Quantity of the Goods ſold amounts to in Value; and the uſing divers Weights and Meaſures, that is, Weights and Meaſures different from, and leſs than the Standard eſtabliſhed by the Laws of the Country in which they live, is in Reality one Way of ſtealing Money from the Buyers.

Ye ſhall do no Unrighteouſneſs in Judgment, ſays the divine Law, *in Mete Yard, in Weight, or in Meaſure. Juſt Balances, juſt Weights, a juſt Ephah, and a juſt Hin ſhall ye have; I am the LORD your God. Therefore ſhall ye obſerve all my Statutes, and all my Judgments, and do them; I* am *the Lord.* Levit. xix. 35, 36, 37.

In *Deut.* xxv. 13, 14, 15, 16. it is ſaid, *Thou ſhalt not have in thy Bag divers Weights, a great and*

a ſmall. Thou ſhalt not have in thine Houſe divers Meaſures, a great and a ſmall. But *thou ſhalt have a perfect and juſt Weight, a perfect and a juſt Meaſure ſhalt thou have; that thy Days may be lengthened in the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. For all that do ſuch Things* (*viz.* the keeping divers Weights and Meaſures) *and all that do unrighteouſly*, are *an Abomination unto the LORD thy God.*

In *Prov.* xi. 1. it is ſaid, *A falſe Ballance* is *Abomination to the Lord: but a juſt Weight* is *his Delight.* And Chap. xx. 10. *Divers Weights*, and *divers Meaſures, both of them* are *alike Abomination to the Lord.* See alſo Verſe 23.

The Prophet *Micah* ſaid to the People (who had provoked deſtroying Judgments by manifold Sins) *He* (viz. God) *hath ſhewed thee, O Man, what* is *good, and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? The LORD's Voice crieth unto the City, and* the Man of *Wiſdom ſhall ſee thy Name: Hear ye the Rod, and who hath appointed it. Are there* yet *the Treaſures of Wickedneſs in the Houſe of the Wicked, and the ſcant Meaſure* that is *abominable? Shall I count* them *pure with the wicked Balances, and with the Bag of deceitful Weights? For the rich Men thereof are full of Violence, and the Inhabitants thereof have ſpoken Lies, and their Tongue* is *deceitful in their Mouth. Therefore alſo will I make* thee *ſick in ſmiting thee, in making* thee *deſolate becauſe of thy Sins.* See *Micah* vi. 8—13.

Theſe *Declarations* ſhew moſt evidently that *fraudulent Dealers*, with falſe Weights and Meaſures, have Reaſon to expect Puniſhment even in this World, when God is viſiting a Nation for their Iniquities.

But if they ſhall eſcape Puniſhment in this World, they ſhould know and conſider, that *the Hope of unjuſt* Men *periſheth*, (Prov. xi. 7.) and that, *The LORD*

LORD knoweth how— to reſerve the unjuſt unto the Day of Judgment to be puniſhed. 2 Pet. ii. 9.

There is yet another Sort of Iniquity to be taken Notice of, as inconſiſtent with that juſt and righteous Manner of Dealing with others, which the *eighth* Commandment obliges all Men to, *viz.* the *Giving* and *Taking Bribes.*

A Bribe is any Gift to another, to bias, or incline him to do ſomething he ought not to do, or to omit doing ſomething he ought to do.

And the righteous God, to prevent all unjuſt Practices among Men, has ſtrictly forbidden this Iniquity. In *Exod.* xxiii. 8. he has ſaid, *Thou ſhalt take no Gift: For the Gift blindeth the Wiſe, and perverteth the Words of the Righteous.* It occaſions Perſons to form a wrong Judgment, or to give an unjuſt Sentence in a Cauſe, or to pervert, or miſinterpret the Words of the Righteous, with whom they have to do.

In *Deut.* xvi. 18, 19, 20. the Holy God ſaid to his People, *Judges and Officers* ſhalt thou *make thee in all thy Gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout all thy Tribes: And they ſhall judge the People with juſt Judgment. Thou ſhalt not wreſt Judgment; thou ſhalt not reſpect Perſons, neither take a Gift: For a Gift doth blind the Eyes of the Wiſe, and pervert the Words* (or *Matters*, as the Expreſſion is tranſlated in the Margin) *of the Righteous. That which is altogether juſt ſhalt thou follow, that thou mayeſt live, and inherit the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* Which laſt Clauſe implies that by receiving Bribes, and not following that which is altogether juſt, they would provoke God by ſome Stroke of Judgment to cut ſhort their Lives.

In *Prov.* xvii. 23. it is ſaid, *A wicked* Man *taketh a Gift out of the Boſom* (i. e. ſecretly) *to pervert the Ways of Judgment*, ſignifying that he is a wicked Man indeed that receiveth a Bribe.

Thus wicked were *Joel*, and *Abiah*, the Sons of *Samuel*, whom he made *Judges over Israel*, they *turned aside after Lucre, and took Bribes, and perverted Judgment*, see 1 *Sam.* viii. 1, 2, 3.

And this Wickedness became general in the Days of the Prophet *Isaiah*, see *Isa.* i. 23, 24. where it is written, *Every one loveth Gifts, and followeth after Rewards: they judge not the Fatherless, neither doth the Cause of the Widow come unto them. Therefore, thus saith the* LORD, *the* LORD *of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.*

This *Declaration* signifies, that such Sinners are Enemies to God, and that he will avenge himself of them; and that they have Reason to fear a Destruction from the Almighty, when he visits a Nation for Sin.

But gracious Promises are made to the Righteous, *that shaketh his Hands from holding of Bribes*, for it is said, *He shall dwell on high: His Place of Defence, shall be the Munition of Rocks, Bread shall be given him, his Waters shall be sure*, Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16. which *Declarations* import that altho' Persons guilty of *Bribery* are obnoxious to the Miseries of a Day of God's Visitation for Sin, yet that the Righteous, who abhor the taking of Bribes, may hope for the divine Protection, and be provided for, and comforted in Times of publick Calamities.

Many Sins bring Guilt only on single Persons, but a BRIBE is an accursed Thing, which pollutes two Persons, and renders them both guilty before God, and obnoxious to his Wrath, *viz.* the *Giver* and the *Receiver* of it, and the Nature of this Iniquity ought to be known to all Men, and abhorred by all Men. And the Action of the Giver, and the Action of the Receiver as to its Signification deserves serious Notice.

The

The Intention of a BRIBE is to prevail with the Receiver of it, to do ſomething in itſelf ſinful, as for a Judge to paſs an unrighteous Judgment on a Cauſe, or elſe to do ſomething, which the Receiver apprehended to be ſinful, and therefore was unlawful for him to do.

In both theſe Caſes the *Giver* endeavours to corrupt the Receiver, and engage him to ſin againſt the holy God, to wound his own Soul, and expoſe himſelf to eternal Damnation; a dreadful Crime! vile in its Nature, and deſtructive in its Conſequences, both to him that gives, and him that takes the Bribe. A ſad Matter to be conſidered by the Guilty; beſide the Injury which may be brought on others by Means of a prevailing Bribe.

The Action of the Giver ſignifies that he is a Man of corrupt Principles, that he fears not God, has no Regard to his Glory, and the Pleaſing him, nor to the Welfare and Salvation of the Soul of the Perſon whom he bribes; it ſignifies that he joins his Endeavours with the Devil's to ruin for ever the Perſon whom he has corrupted.

And the Action of the *Receiver* ſignifies, that he is deſtitute of a right, and good Principle, that he has yielded to, and been overcome by the Temptation, and that he has ſold the Favour of God, and his Soul, and Salvation for the Price of the Bribe he has received.

Theſe Remarks have a like Foundation when a Bribe is given to prevail with any one not to do a Thing which the Law of God has made his Duty, or which he apprehends that God requires of him.

Both the Givers, and Receivers of Bribes, are Men of very corrupt Minds; and without ſincere Repentance, and a thorough Reformation, they will never eſcape the Damnation of Hell, though they ſhould be ſuffered to eſcape Puniſhment in this World.

Theſe

Theſe Things deſerve the ſerious Conſideration both of thoſe, who at *Elections of Members to ſerve in Parliament*, give Bribes to engage Votes, and of thoſe who receive them.

XIV. Perſons who bear falſe Witneſs againſt others are another Sort of Sinners who have juſt Reaſon to fear Puniſhment when God viſits a Nation for Sin.

Theſe are Tranſgreſſors of the *ninth* Commandment, which ſays, *Thou ſhalt not bear falſe Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour*, Exod. xx. 16.

The Prohibition is not limited to the bearing falſe Witneſs againſt others on Trials in Courts of Judicature, altho' that is a moſt aggravated Kind of falſe Witneſs-Bearing, becauſe of the Oath taken by Witneſſes, wherein they appeal to God for the Truth of what they ſay falſely. But a Man's Reputation, and Livelihood may be ruin'd by falſe Witneſſes that are never called before Magiſtrates.

A Man bears falſe Witneſs againſt his Neighbour, when he ſpeaks that of another, which he knows to be falſe; whether it be in a Way of Affirmation, or Negation; whether he affirms of another that he ſpoke ſuch Words, or did ſuch Things, which he knows he did not; or denies his having ſpoken Words, which himſelf heard, or his doing Things which to his Knowledge the other really did.

All falſe Witneſſes are Liars, and all Liars *ſhall have their Part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimſtone*, as it is ſaid in *Rev.* xxi. 8.

Wherefore (ſaith St. *Paul) putting away Lying, ſpeak every Man Truth with his Neighbour: For we are Members one of another*, Epheſ. iv. 25.

A faithful Witneſs will not lie: But a falſe Witneſs will utter Lies, it is ſaid *Prov.* xiv. 5. and Verſe 25. *a true Witneſs delivereth Souls, but a deceitful* Witneſs *ſpeaketh Lies.*

In

In *Prov.* xix. 15. it is declared, *He that justifieth the Wicked, and he that condemneth the Just, even they both* are *Abomination to the* LORD.

The supreme Lawgiver says, *Thou shalt not raise a false Report: Put not thine Hand with the Wicked to be an unrighteous Witness*, Exod. xxiii. 1.

And in *Prov.* xix. 5. it is declared that, *A false Witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh Lies shall not escape.* This *Declaration* shews, that these Sinners have Reason to expect Punishment in the Day of the LORD's Visitation for Sin.

The speaking falsely of others is a pernicious Practice; and the doing so as Witnesses in Courts of Judicature has brought innocent Persons to suffer Death for Crimes they never committed, and others to loose their Estates, which were their just Property, or to loose their good Reputation, a Blessing more valuable than Life.

They who are guilty of this cruel Iniquity do not deal towards others, as they would have others to deal with them.

They imitate their Father the Devil, who is the *Accuser* of the *Brethren*, see *Rev.* xii. 9, 10.

And altho' they may for a while escape Punishment, the Day is coming when the righteous God will take Vengeance on them, when they shall neither be able to escape, nor able to bear his Wrath.

XV. COVETOUS Persons, are another Sort of Sinners marked by divine Threatnings for suffering Punishment in the Day of the LORD's Visitation for Sin.

These are Transgressors of the *tenth* Commandment, which says, *Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's House, thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's Wife, nor his Man-servant, nor his Maid-servant, nor his Ox, nor his Ass, nor any Thing that is thy Neighbours*, Exod. xx. 19.

This

This Law ſhews that it is ſinful to deſire any Thing that is another's Property, and appropriated to his own Uſe; becauſe the Things of another, which he trades in, and has a Right to ſell, and which we have Occaſion for, we may deſire, and may purchaſe; but appropriated Things we muſt not deſire, or covet.

A ſtrong Deſire, or Coveting another Man's Houſe, or Land, has prevailed with ſome to murder the rightful Poſſeſſor, as was the Caſe when *Ahab* coveted *Naboth*'s Vineyard, 1 *Kings* xxi. or to uſe other unjuſt Methods to get the Poſſeſſion of it.

Thus coveting another Man's Wife; has been followed with Adultery, and Murther; of which *David* was a ſad Inſtance.

And the coveting the Servants of others, has influenced ſome to uſe indirect, or diſhoneſt Means to prevail with them to leave their Maſters.

And the coveting of Money has led many to rob, ſteal, and commit Murder. *So are the Ways of every one that is greedy of Gain: Which taketh away the Life of the Owners thereof*, Prov. i. 19.

The *tenth* Commandment muſt be underſtood to forbid all inordinate, or too ſtrong Deſires after worldly Things, or too much Love to Money: Becauſe ſuch Coveting is not only inconſiſtent with the Love we owe to God, and to our Neighbour, but leads on to many other Sins.

For (as St. *Paul* ſays) *the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil: Which while ſome covet after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themſelves through with many Sorrows*, 1 Tim. vi. 10.

Here I would obſerve that a Man's Deſire of Money, or other worldly Things is certainly too ſtrong, or is a ſinful Coveting, when for obtaining them, he will uſe unlawful Means, or neglect ſome Duty God requires of him; and likewiſe, when, for the Sake of increaſing his Riches, he will withhold

to

to himſelf what God would have him to diſtribute for the Uſe and Benefit of others.

Thus, if a Man for Lucre Sake will be guilty of Extortion, he is a covetous Man; or if inſtead of performing the religious Duties of the Sabbath, he will buy, or ſell on that holy Day, or if on other Days he will be ſo eager in his Purſuits after earthly Riches, as not to allow Time for the Worſhip of God in his Family, and Cloſet, he is a covetous Man: And likewiſe if he will not expend in the Maintenance of his Family, and Education of his Children, ſo much as according to his Rank in the World, and his Riches, ought to be expended, he is a covetous Man; and if he will not diſtribute in Acts of Charity, according to his Abilities, and the Occaſions, which call for his Aſſiſtance, he may juſtly be thought a covetous Man.

And ſuch covetous Perſons certainly do love their Money, more than they love their God; for they who do not deſire, and endeavour to pleaſe God, cannot be truly ſaid to love him; and of thoſe, who wilfully ſin againſt God in their way of getting, or of keeping Money, it cannot be juſtly ſaid they deſire, and endeavour to pleaſe him.

The covetous, the Lord abhorreth, Pſal. x. 3.

In *Prov.* xxviii. 16. it is ſaid, *He that hateth Covetouſneſs ſhall prolong* his *Days*, which implies that he who loveth Covetouſneſs, is like to ſhorten his Days.

In *Iſa.* lvii. 17. The Lord ſaid of his People, *For the Iniquity of his Covetouſneſs was I wroth, and ſmote him.* Hence it is very evident, that in Ages paſt, God inflicted deſtroying Judgments on his People for their Covetouſneſs. And therefore covetous Perſons have Reaſon to be afraid of his Judgments in the Day that he viſits a Land for Sin.

It was a ſad Complaint which God made of his People in *Ezek.* xxiii. 31. where he ſays to the Pro-

phet concerning them, *They come unto thee, as the People cometh, and they sit before thee* as *my People, and they hear thy Words, but they will not do them: for their Heart goeth after their Covetousness.* That is, altho' they profess Love, and Obedience to God, and attend the solemn Assemblies to hear the Words of the Lord delivered by his Prophet, yet they will not do them; their strongest, and prevailing Affections, being after Riches and other worldly Things, the Objects of their Covetousness.

Their Riches, and other earthly Things, are the *Idols* of their Hearts: therefore, Covetousness is declared to be *Idolatry* in *Col.* iii. 5. where Christians are commanded to *mortify* ——*inordinate Affections, evil Concupisence, and Covetousness, which is Idolatry.*

In *Ephes.* v. 5. it is declared, *That no Whoremonger, nor unclean Person, nor covetous Man, who is an Idolater, hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God.*

It appears from this *Declaration*, that it is decreed by the righteous Governour of the World, that *covetous* Persons shall not be admitted to partake of the Joys, and Happiness of the Kingdom of Christ, and of God: And this implies that they will be sent into endless Miseries in the next Word, and that they are liable to destroying Judgments in this, when God proceeds in visiting a Nation for Sin.

The Covetous, instead of looking to, and relying on the Lord, place a Confidence in their Wealth. *The rich Man's Wealth, is his strong City, and as an high Wall in his own Conceit*; as it is said in *Prov.* xviii. 11. But let such know, and consider those *Declarations* recorded in *Prov.* xi. 4. viz. *Riches profit not in the Day of Wrath*; and Verse 28. *He that trusteth in Riches shall fall.*

Thus saith the LORD —— *Let not the rich Man glory in his Riches*, Jer. ix. 23.

In

In *Jer.* xv. 13. God ſays to the Wicked among his People, *Thy Subſtance, and thy Treaſures will I give to the Spoil without Price, and* that for *all thy Sins, even in all thy Borders*, Jer. xv. 13. See alſo *Jer.* xvii. 3.

Theſe *Declarations* plainly ſhew that the Covetous, and they who will go on in diſobeying the Commandments of the Lord, have Reaſon to be afraid, when he is riſen out of his Place to puniſh wicked Nations.

I have now conſidered the principal Sorts of Perſons, Tranſgreſſors of one or other of the *ten* Commandments, againſt whom the holy God has denounced his awful Threatnings.

A righteous Nation, a holy City, whoſe Inhabitants know, and love, and ſerve the Lord, and make it their Practice to obey all his Precepts, have no Cauſe to be afraid, but abundant Ground for Comfort, and Joy on the Account of the manifold Promiſes of Bleſſings in this World, and of everlaſting Felicity in the next, which are made to the Righteous.

But if the Inhabitants of a City, or Country, have revolted from God, if the Generality of them have caſt off the Fear of the Almighty, and have long been regardleſs of his Authority, and Laws, and have gone on ſtubbornly in wicked Ways, and remain incorrigible, notwithſtanding the Obligations of multiplied Bleſſings, notwithſtanding the Patience, and long Forbearance of God, notwithſtanding the divers Threatnings, and the Feeling of leſſer Judgments, they have then the ſtrongeſt Reaſons to expect that the righteous God will proceed in viſiting them for Sin, and pour out the Vials of his Wrath upon them.

I ſhall now conclude theſe Papers with an Addreſs to the Inhabitants of *London*, *Weſtminſter*, and all the other Parts of *Great-Britain*.

I need not tell you that Infidelity, and Profaneneſs, that a Contempt, and Deriſion of the divine Providence, and the holy Scriptures, are crying Sins among us; nor that keeping holy the Sabbath-Day, and a due Attendance on the publick Worſhip of God are generally neglected; nor that our Cities and Country have long been polluted with all Sorts of Immoralities; neither need I ſay to you that the holy God has ſhewn himſelf angry with us, by a Series of awful Judgments, tho' ſome of them thro' his abundant Mercy have been taken away.

And ſurely I need not ſay to you that Iniquities ſtill abound among us, that Provocations of almighty Wrath are ſtill committed, and that there appears very little of Reformation; neither need I add that the Tokens of God's Anger do ſtill ſubſiſt.

The great God has given us Warning after Warning, and Stroke after Stroke, and then ceaſed awhile, and waited to ſee whether we will conſider our evil Ways, and repent of our Sins, and return unto him; he has waited, and ſtill waits that he may be gracious to us; that he may, conſiſtent with the Honour of his Government, with the Glory of his Name, forgive our Sins, and be reconciled unto us, and bleſs us. But the Reconciliation is not yet brought about; No, for we ſtubbornly perſiſt in our Rebellion againſt him: And it is too evident to be denied that his Hand is ſtill ſtretched out againſt us.

Was it not that holy God who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity without Abhorrence, and without being incenſed againſt the wilful Tranſgreſſors of his Laws? Was it not he who permitted our Enemies to draw the Sword, and from a Number, ſmall, at firſt, to increaſe into a Multitude, and to march thro' the Heart of our Country, and to approach

proach ſo near this our Metropolis, as to fill the Minds of all true Proteſtants, and faithful Subjects of our gracious Sovereign with a Dread of the Conſequences, if he had not by his Influence turned them back by the Way that they came, and afterwards intirely ſubdued them? Was it not he, who ſent the *mortal Sickneſs* among our Cattle? and who has been thro' a Courſe of ſeveral Years deſtroying them! and ſhewing that he can as eaſily deſtroy our Perſons! and does he not awfully proceed, in the Way of his Anger, by ſmiting the Beaſts of the Field ſtill with Sickneſs, and Death, in divers Parts of the Country?

Pray conſider, That *Deſtruction of Cattle* is one of God's threatned Judgments; and that this ſtill ſubſiſts in the Land; and that Earthquakes are another Sort of them, very terrible: And let us keep in Remembrance how the Almighty has once and again very lately made the Earth to tremble under theſe great Cities; and has violently ſhaken the Houſes of the Inhabitants over them; and that the divine Power might either have cauſed the Earth to open and ſwallow up the Buildings, and all the living Creatures that are upon it, or elſe without the Opening of the Earth might have ſhattered, and thrown down even the ſtrongeſt Edifices, and have cruſhed to Death thoſe who dwell in them; and who can tell what, or how many of his other Threatnings will be executed among us, or how ſoon!

I entreat you to read again, and again, and revolve in your Minds what has been offered to your Thoughts in the foregoing Papers.

Let every one faithfully examine himſelf, and conſider whether he is not of one or other of the Sorts of Perſons whom God has threatened, not only with everlaſting Torments in the future State, but with Miſeries, with Diſtreſs, and Deſtruction even in this World, when he viſits Cities, and Nations for their Sins.

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If you compare your Lives with the holy Laws of God, your Conſciences will tell you, whether you are among the miſerable Objects of the divine Threatnings.

And is this your Caſe! I muſt then tell you, that you are under a dreadful Sentence of Condemnation.

For hitherto you have not repented of your Sins, nor believed on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

In *John* iii. 18, 19. it is thus declared, *viz. He that believeth not is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds were evil.*

O how deplorable is your Condition! in being Enemies to God by your wicked Works, in being the Servants of Sin, and Satan? How deplorable, I ſay, is your Condition, whatever be your worldly Honours, Riches, and Poſſeſſions, or Eminency for Learning! *Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourſelves Servants to obey, his Servants ye are, to whom ye obey, whether of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteouſneſs!* Rom. vi. 16.

How lamentable is your Caſe in your being Objects of the divine Anger! For *God is angry* with the Wicked *every Day*, (Pſal. vii. 11.) He is ſo continually; and how wretched are you, in your being obnoxious to all the Miſeries threatned to be inflicted in this Life! and in being liable to a ſpeedy Death, and to the Pains of Hell for ever!

And what Comfort, what Peace can you have in your preſent State? *There is no Peace, ſaith my God, to the Wicked*, Iſai. lvii. 21.

What have you to yield unto your Souls a rational, a ſincere Conſolation! Have you ſtately Houſes, rich Furniture, large Eſtates, and great Honours? yet theſe do not ſatisfy you.

You

You ſeek after Pleaſure, and Joy in ſenſual Entertainments; your Ears are delighted with exquiſite Muſick; your Eyes are pleaſed with a vaſt Variety of the agreeable Objects of Sight! Numberleſs are the Recreations, and Amuſements, which human Invention has contrived to take up your Time.

But theſe Things do not ſatisfy you! you are at great Expences, and often take great Pains; you fatigue your Bodies, and prejudice your Health in Purſuits of Objects, to gratify one or other of your bodily Senſes.

And in the midſt of your higheſt Enjoyments, you ſtill find ſomething wanting to give your Minds ſatisfying Joy! you have not yet found Reſt for your Souls!

And all the while that you have an Affluence of worldly Things, you are wretched Creatures. The Curſe of God is upon you! you are liable to a Variety of Diſtempers, to the Gout, to the Stone, and to a thouſand other bodily Diſeaſes, to Melancholy, to Deſpair; and you are obnoxious to Enemies, to Shame, and to a Diverſity of Afflictions, which you cannot comprehend, and liable to everlaſting Torment in the next World.

But I may add, that altho' your preſent Condition is bad beyond Conception, yet you may be delivered from it! There is a ſure Way to Safety, Comfort, and Happineſs, both in this World, and in that to which you are going. Read again, and ponder in your Thoughts what has been propoſed to your Conſideration in my former Letter, Pag. 28, 29, *&c.* for the Encouragement of your Hope and Joy in following the Directions of the Goſpel.

Repent of your Sins, and believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt and all your Iniquities will be forgiven you. Our good God, tho' you have provoked him Times and Ways without Number, will then be reconciled to you; and your eternal Salvation, and

Happineſs

Happineſs through the crucified, the riſen, the exalted and bleſſed JESUS will be ſure.

O become ſincere Diſciples of the crucified, and riſen Jeſus! take him for your Saviour, and Prince! for your Maſter, and Lord! and truſt in him, and in him alone, for a compleat Salvation from all your Sins, as well as from the everlaſting Puniſhment due unto you for them! Truſt in him alone for Holineſs, and Happineſs; for Grace to encline, and enable you to lead holy Lives according to the Will of God.

Then will you find thoſe rational Pleaſures, thoſe ſincere Comforts, and that ſolid Peace and Reſt for your Souls, which you never knew before! then will you know the Difference between the Pleaſures of Sin, and the Conſolations which the Goſpel adminiſters to penitent, and believing Sinners! then you will deſpiſe, and abhor your former carnal, and ſenſual Delights, and find that Satisfaction in the Service, and Enjoyment of God, which you would not part with for ten thouſand Worlds. This has been the Experience of thoſe who formerly practiſed the like Sins, and purſued and enjoyed the ſame ſenſual Pleaſures as yourſelves, but ſince have been truly converted, and have accepted of Chriſt, and joined themſelves to the Lord in his gracious Covenant, and walk cloſely with him in the Way of Holineſs, and known by Experience that the Pleaſures of a religious holy Life, are inexpreſſibly greater than thoſe of Sin.

And O that it may pleaſe the God of all Grace, by the mighty working of his holy Spirit, to put it into your Hearts ſincerely thus to expreſs yourſelves unto him, *viz.*

" O holy, and moſt merciful God! I am now
" convinced that I have long been a vile, ſinful,
" guilty, and a rebellious Creature againſt Thee!
" convinced that there is a ſinful, and dreadful De-
" pravity

" pravity in my Nature, and a ſtrong and prevail-
" ing Bias on my Will and Affections to Things
" contrary to thy Laws! and that I have been eagerly
" purſuing Objects, unbecoming the Deſires, which
" I ought to cheriſh! I am now convinced that I
" want a Saviour! and that I muſt be miſerable for
" ever without one!

" I am now convinced that thy only begotten,
" and well-beloved Son, the bleſſed Jeſus, is the
" Saviour, and I thankfully accept of him as my
" only Redeemer! as my great Prophet, Prieſt,
" and King!

" Faith is thy Gift! Lord, beſtow this heavenly
" Gift on me in a large Meaſure! and quicken
" me by thy Spirit, who am naturally dead in Tref-
" paſſes, and Sins!

" O make me a new Creature in Chriſt Jeſus!
" Make the old Things to paſs away, and all
" Things to *become new* * and holy in me!

" I now renounce all my Sins! I give up myſelf
" unto Thee, to be thine in the everlaſting Cove-
" nant; and to be inſtructed, inclined, and enabled
" always to live according to the Engagements of
" it.

" O pardon all my Sins! be Thou my reconciled
" God, my Lord, my Lawgiver, and my Portion,
" now henceforth, and for ever! Amen, for the
" Sake of Chriſt Jeſus my Advocate, and Redeemer.
" Amen."

Thus be you prevailed with to accept of Chriſt, and devote yourſelves to God; and teſtify the Sincerity of your Faith in Chriſt, and the Uprightneſs of your Hearts, by a conſtant Attendance on the publick Worſhip of God, and a conſcientious Obedience to all his Commandments.

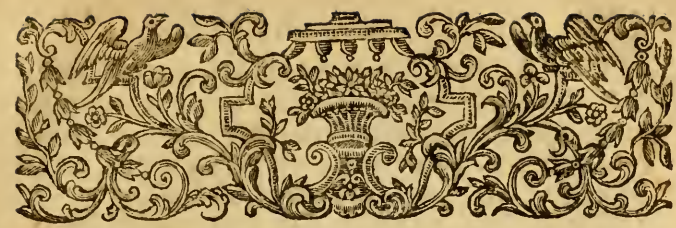
* 2 *Cor.* v. 17.

And let not the Scoffs and Derisions of any of your Acquaintance make you ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, who suffered Death, that you might obtain Forgiveness, and everlasting Life! nor ashamed of observing his Sabbaths, and Ordinances, nor of owning his Cause, and his People.

Let the Operations of the Divine Providence be compared with the *Declarations* of God recorded in his Word, and they are a perpetual Evidence of the Divine Authority of the sacred Scriptures, and of the Truth of the Gospel! An Evidence of the Being, Wisdom, Power, Goodness, and Righteousness of God, and of the Unreasonableness of Atheism, and Infidelity, and indeed of all Irreligion.

Many other Things I might fitly propose to the Consideration of the Inhabitants of *Great Britain*, who have long been under the Threatnings of the Word and Providence of God; but I will only add, that God, in the Time of his awful Visitation of Cities and Countries for Sin, will make a Difference in his Dealings with the Righteous, and the Wicked. See *Isa.* iii. 10, 11. *Say ye to the Righteous that* it *shall* be *well* with him: *For they shall eat the Fruit of their Doings. Wo unto the Wicked*, it shall be *ill* with him: *For the Reward of his Hands shalll be given him.*

The E N D.



LETTER III.

Containing the Introduction, with ſome Thoughts of the Importance of continuing the Uſe of the Expreſſions in the Sacred Scriptures among Chriſtians, and a Summary of the Evidences of the Truth of the Goſpel for the Conviction of ſuch as are doubting of it; and the Confirmation of the Faith of Serious Chriſtians; withall ſhewing the ſad State of Infidels, who have the Means of knowing the Truth.

IN the foregoing Letters I gave a Summary of the Divine Laws, chiefly in the Order of the Ten Commandments, and conſidered the Predictions relative to thoſe Perſons, who live in wilful Diſobedience to any of them; I have ſhewed that the Holy God, who has denounced everlaſting Puniſhments, and Torments on them in the next World, has likewiſe threatned them with horrible Puniſhments, and Miſeries in this.

I have ſhewed that the Righteous God will viſit Cities, and Countries with his great Plagues, if the Wicked Inhabitants of them will not be reformed, either by his Methods of Mercy, or by his leſſer Judgments.

 Theſe

Theſe Things I have given an Account of; that ſo by the Conſideration of them ſome Perſons may be brought to Repentance towards God and Faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is both able, and willing to ſave, even the Chief of Sinners.

The terrible Predictions of inexpreſſible Miſeries to be inflicted on incorrigible Sinners, collected in the foregoing Papers, may well fill the Minds of impenitent, ſtubborn Perſons with Amazement and Horror. And eſpecially ſince the Righteous God is riſen out of his Place to puniſh the Inhabitants of the World for their Iniquities; ſince by his juſt Providence thro' the Courſe of ſeveral late Years, He has been bringing upon many Cities and Countries the Miſeries of War, or of Peſtilence, or of Famine; ruining Thouſands after Thouſands, both Rich and Poor, and deſtroying the Lives of Multitudes after Multitudes: I ſay ſince theſe Events, there is Reaſon for wilful Sinners to be afraid.

And thoſe Cities and Nations, which have hitherto been preſerved in Health, Tranquility and Plenty, have no Ground to imagine they ſhall always eſcape unpuniſhed; but they have Reaſon to fear ſuffering the like Judgments except they repent.

God indeed delights not in the Miſeries of his diſobedient Servants: *Say to them, as I live ſaith the* LORD GOD *I have no Pleaſure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way, and live.* (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) Joyful Tidings to all Sorts of Sinners! God in his infinite Mercy has provided a mighty Saviour, his only begotten and well beloved SON; and in his Goſpel has revealed the Way, by which the moſt wretched Tranſgreſſors may obtain a ſure Intereſt in him, and Salvation by him.

This

This ſure Way, I have likewiſe conſidered in the former Letters, that ſo none may Deſpair, but all may be prevailed with by the Loving-kindneſs of the Lord; to renounce their Sins, and with Joy accept of Chriſt, and truſt in him, to ſave them from their Sins, and from the dreadful Wrath, which is coming on the Children of Diſobedience.

I ſhall in the following Papers conſider thoſe PREDICTIONS of Bleſſings, which may adminiſter Comfort to the Minds of ſerious Chriſtians at all Times; and particularly when God is viſiting the Inhabitants of any City, or Country, for their Iniquities.

I may obſerve that in all Ages, and in every Town and Nation; there are in God's Account, but two Sorts of People; viz. the *Righteous*, and the *Wicked:* Into theſe general Claſſes they are diſtributed, in Gen. xviii. 23, 25.

The Expreſſion the *Righteous* comprehends all thoſe, who did know, love, and ſerve God, all who believed his Word, and whoſe Courſe of Life was a Practice of all Duties towards God and Man, required by the Divine Laws; and the Expreſſion the *Wicked* includes all thoſe, who would not practice the Duties they owe to God and Man, and did not believe his Word.

The Expreſſions ſtill retain the ſame Significations. And at the End of the World people will be divided only into two Sorts. *When the Son of Man ſhall come in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with him, then ſhall he ſit upon the Throne of his Glory, and before him ſhall be gathered all Nations, and he ſhall ſeparate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth the Sheep from the Goats; and he ſhall ſet the Sheep on his right Hand, and the Goats on his left.* (Matt. xxv. 31, 32, 33.) By the Metaphor of *Sheep* are meant the faithful Servants of God, the true Diſciples of Chriſt; and by that of *Goats*

are ſignified all the Diſobedient and Impenitent, who would not believe, and obey the Goſpel.

Thus from the Beginning of the World to the End of it, there are only two Sorts of People.

After Chriſt (the promiſed Meſſiah) came into the World, and his Goſpel was preached! they who were convinced by it, and believed on the Holy Jeſus, and accepted of him as their Saviour and Prince, were called Believers.

By this Title they were denoted in *Acts* v. 14. Where it is ſaid, *and Believers were the more added to the Lord, Multitudes both of Men and Women.*

Thus alſo in 1 *Tim.* iv. 12. where the Apoſtle ſays to him, *Be thou an Example of the Believers.*

And the Believers were called Chriſtians, firſt at Antioch. (*Acts* xi. 26.) and from that Time they who profeſſed the Goſpel were denominated by the ſame Name. But it muſt be ſaid that not all, who call themſelves Chriſtians are ſuch in Truth.

They who live in wilful Diſobedience to the Rules of his Goſpel are not Chriſt's Diſciples indeed.

The Apoſtle James ſays, *Even ſo Faith, if it hath not Works, is dead*; (James ii. 17.) that is, it is as uſeleſs as a Body without Life.

No Sorts of wilful Sinners are ſerious Chriſtians; *Know ye not that the Unrighteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abuſers of themſelves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God.* (1 *Cor.* vi. 9, 10.) Therefore none of thoſe ſorts of People are to be reckoned ſerious Chriſtians.

But that we may better underſtand, who are truly Religious or ſincere Chriſtians, to whom the Predictions of Bleſſings do belong, Bleſſings intended

intended for their Happineſs, Comfort and Joy; I ſhall conſider ſome of the Characters by which they are deſcribed, or diſtinguiſhed from others in the Holy Scriptures; and likewiſe ſome of the Bleſſings promiſed to them.

Theſe Things I propoſe to give an Account of, *not in the Words, which Man's Wiſdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghoſt teacheth: Comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual.* (1 *Cor.* ii. 13.) Doubtleſs God knows what Words and Expreſſions are fitteſt to convey to our Minds the Ideas, and Thoughts he would have us to entertain.

And therefore we are not to lay them aſide in Speaking of our Spiritual Concerns, and of the Doctrines he has revealed, or of the Ordinances, and Laws he has enjoined us.

It is a Duty, and a very weighty Duty, to retain and uſe the Language of the Holy Scriptures; for the Laying aſide the Uſe of the Words, and Expreſſions of God, which we find in his Sacred Revelation contained in our Bible, is a Throwing into Oblivion, and a Loſing thoſe important Thoughts and Ideas, which they deſcribe and expreſs; and indeed it is Rejecting ſo much of the Goſpel as is contained in them.

It introduces different Ideas and Notions; and ſo far another Religion, or Goſpel; although they, who do ſo, call themſelves Chriſtians.

Can I with Reaſon believe that Man to have been born and lived in England, who neither uſes, nor underſtands the Engliſh Language? And have I more Reaſon to think that Man a real Chriſtian, who neither uſes, nor underſtands the Language of the Goſpel, thoſe Words which the Holy Ghoſt teacheth?

It is a bold Undertaking in any Perſon to alter the Language of the Holy Spirit, or to bring into Diſuſe thoſe Words and Phraſes by which he expreſſes

expreſſes the Doctrines of the Goſpel, and the Things which concern our Salvation.

In *Rev.* xxii. 18, 19. it is ſaid, *If any Man ſhall add unto theſe Things, God ſhall add to him the Plagues that are written in this Book. And if any Man ſhall take away from the Words of the Book of this Prophecy, God ſhall take away his Part out of the Book of Life.*

It is a heinous Sin to add any Thing unto, or to take away from the Words of any other Book of the Holy Scriptures.

In *Prov.* xxx. 5, 6. it is ſaid, *Every Word of God is pure, he is a Shield unto them that put their Truſt in him: Add thou not unto his Words, leſt he reprove thee and thou be found a Liar.*

In *Deut.* iv. 2. it is written, *Ye ſhall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither ſhall you diminiſh ought from it.*

My Soul trembles at the Thoughts of Laying aſide the Language of the ſacred Scriptures, and ſubſtituting other Expreſſions in the Stead of it.

St. *Paul* ſays, *But though we, or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Goſpel* (that is, other Doctrines about Chriſt and Salvation by him,) *than that which we have preached to you, let him be accurſed.* See Gal. i. 8, 9, 10.

By uſing the Expreſſions of the Sacred Scriptures, the Words which the Holy Ghoſt teacheth, I do not mean that we muſt not uſe any others; for the Uſe of other Words is very needful in preaching the Goſpel, and expounding the Scriptures, and in catechiſing and inſtructing Children and Youth, and in diſcourſing on the ſeveral Parts of Divine Revelation.

But we muſt not diſuſe the Scripture Language, nor uſe Terms which convey Ideas, or Thoughts different from, and repugnant to it.

In

In every Language, into which the Holy Scriptures have been tranſlated from the *Hebrew* and *Greek*, the Words are different as to the Letters, Syllables and Sound; but as the Words in the ſeveral Tranſlations ſignify and expreſs the ſame Thoughts, and Ideas, which are conveyed to the Mind by the Words in the Original Language, the Words in every Tranſlation, may ſo far be eſteemed the Words, which the Holy Ghoſt teacheth.

If what I have ſaid concerning the Words of the Holy Ghoſt, and of the Importance of continuing the Uſe of them, be a Diſgreſſion, it is a neceſſary One, and needs no Apology in this Age, wherein many are fallen into a Diſlike and Diſuſe of them.

I ſhall now conſider ſome Parts of the Holy Scriptures, by which it may be known who are real Chriſtians, to whom the Predictions of Bleſſings do relate, and who may be much comforted by them.

The Character of real Chriſtians in general, includes a *Believing thoſe Things, which are written concerning Chriſt.*

The Apoſtle Paul in Defence of himſelf before Felix, ſays, *This I confeſs unto thee, that after the Way which they call Hereſy, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers; believing all Things which are written in the Law, and the Prophets.* (Acts xxiv. 14.) That is, all the Things written concerning Chriſt, as appears from the Context; and for the ſame Reaſons we are to believe all Things that are written concerning Chriſt by the Apoſtles in the New Teſtament.

I ſhall therefore mention ſome of thoſe Things which are written in the Sacred Scriptures concerning *Chriſt*, and which we are to believe.

It is plainly evident from what is written in the Holy Scriptures, that the promised Messiah, (the Redeemer of Israel, and the Saviour of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews,) was a Person of transcendent Excellency, Majesty, Authority, Power and Goodness.

It was revealed that he should be a *Man*; that is, that he should have an human Nature, consisting of an human Soul, and Body. This appears from its being declared, *That he should be a Child, born of a Virgin.* (Isa. vii. 14.)

For every Child, every Son that is born of a Woman hath an human Soul, and an human Body.

And of the Virgin Mary it is said, that *She was found with Child of the Holy Ghost.* (Matt. i. 18.) *And when she brought forth her first born Son, his Name was called Jesus*, according to the Appointment of God his Father. (*ver.* 25.) and in (1 Tim. ii. 5.) he is called *The Man Christ Jesus.*

But it is also revealed that the Messiah, our blessed Redeemer is God, as well as Man: For those Things are affirmed of him, which cannot be applied to any meer Creature.

It is testified that when the Messiah should come, he should be *Immanuel*, that is, *God with us.* (Isa. vii. 14.) and afterwards, that *He is the Mighty God.* (Isa. ix. 6.)

And in (John i. 1, 3.) it is revealed that, *In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All Things were made by him, and without him was not any Thing made that was made.*

And in (*ver.* 14.) it is said, *And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.*

In (John iii. 13.) the blessed Jesus himself says, *No Man hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came*

came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.

This ſhews that the Son of Man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, had another Nature beſides the Human; a *Nature* Omnipreſent, which was in Heaven, at the ſame Time it was preſent with him, while he was on Earth, talking with Nicodemus.

Hereby Chriſt made it known that his human Nature was united to the Divine; and that he is both God, and Man, in one Perſon, and may well be called *Wonderful.*

Of this glorious Perſon, the Prophet (in Iſa. ix. 6, 7.) ſaid, *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the Government ſhall be upon his Shoulders, and his Name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſeller, the mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the Increaſe of his Government,* (which implies it would be ſmall at firſt) *and Peace, there ſhall be no End. Upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdoms, to order and to eſtabliſh it with Judgment, and with Juſtice, from henceforth even for ever: The Zeal of the* LORD *of Hoſts will perform this.*

And (in Iſa. xlix. 5, 6.) *Now ſaith the Lord;* (that is, to his promiſed Meſſiah) *I will alſo give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayeſt be my Salvation to the Ends of the Earth.*

He is declared to be *A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of his People Iſrael.* (Luke ii. 32.)

He is called *The Deſire of all Nations.* (Hag. ii. 7.)

And all Nations ought to deſire him, on the Account of his Divine Excellencies; his Majeſty, and Power, and Honour, and Glory; and on the Account of his redeeming Love; his great Compaſſion for all Sorts of People, in a State of Sin

and Misery; and undertaking to procure a great Salvation, not for the Jews only, but for all Nations.

In regard to Authority, Wisdom, Power, Justice and Goodness, and likewise in Respect to his Dominion, the Extent, and Duration of it, the greatest Potentates on Earth are as nothing.

Yet how did this most glorious Person, whom the Holy Angels worship and adore, how did he enter into this World?

Not with Pomp, and Grandeur; no, he was born of a Virgin in mean Circumstances, tho' descended from David the King; he was born of one destitute of the Conveniences common to Women in her Condition. And altho he was born King of the Jews, he had no Palace for the Place of his Birth, but his first Accommodations were in a Stable, and to be laid in a Manger.

Behold, O my Soul, the Beginning of thy Saviour's Life! The Beginning of a Life of deep Humiliation and Suffering! Surely he was a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief, from his Birth to his Death.

And why was all this, but out of Love and Pity to me and other Sinners like myself? And shall I not love him, who so greatly humbled himself that I might be delivered from my natural State of Sin and Misery, and be exalted into a State of Holiness and Happiness?

I pray that I may be enabled always, to love him in Sincerity.

In Isa. liii. 2. the Prophet speaking what would be the Thoughts of the Jews, when the Messiah should appear, says, *He has no Form nor Comeliness: And when we shall see him, there is no Beauty that we should desire him.* That is, none that was agreeable to the carnal Expectations and Wishes of the Jews.

The

The Jews therefore despised and rejected him, because he came into the World in a mean, and low Condition, destitute of the Accommodations of the Attendants, and of the Honours, which are common to Emperors and Kings.

But did not the great God bear witness that this Jesus of Nazareth was his Son, and the very Messiah spoken of by all the Prophets, notwithstanding his Poverty, and mean Appearance among the Jews?

Did not the Angel of the Lord appear unto Joseph in a Dream, saying, *Joseph, thou Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy Wife: For that, which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his Name* Jesus: *For he shall save his People from their Sins?* (Matt. i. 20, 21.)

And when Christ was born, did not the Almighty God make known this grand Event to certain wise Men in the East, and reveal to them that this Child was born King of the Jews? (Matt. ii. 1, 2.) and did he not incline them to take a long Journey to visit, and bring Presents, and pay their Homage to him? And did he not by a miraculous Star guide them, and made it pass before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was? (Matt. ii. 9.)

When the Virgin Mary brought forth her first born Son (in Bethlehem) and wrapped him in Swadling Cloths, and laid him in a Manger, because there was no Room for him in the Inn: (Luke ii. 7.) we read, *There were in the same Country Shepherds abiding in the Field, keeping Watch over their Flock by Night: And lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the Angel said unto them, fear not: For behold I bring you good Tidings of great*

Joy, which shall be (the Occasion of great Joy) *to all People, for unto you* (and to all People) *is born this Day in* (Bethlehem) *the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ* (or the Messiah) *the Lord. And this shall be a Sign unto you; ye shall find the Babe wrapped in Swadling Clothes, lying in a Manger.*

Thus God sent an Angel to publish or proclaim to the Shepherds, that the *Messiah* was come; that the glorious Saviour was born in Bethlehem, Christ the Lord. (Luke ii. 8, &c.)

But God did not attest this grand Event, by one Angel only, No, *For suddenly there was with that Angel, a Multitude of the Heavenly Host, praising God* (on this Account,) *and saying: Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.* (ver. 13, 14.) *And when the Angels were gone from them into Heaven, the Shepherds said one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this Thing, which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a Manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the Saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it, wondered at those Things which were told them by the Shepherds.*

Thus God himself did bear Witness that Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, *was his Son*, and the true Messiah, and thus in the most magnificent and glorious Manner, proclaimed his Birth to the World.

And as at his Birth, so through his Life, and at his Death, and after it did God bear witness to the Truth of his Gospel.

When the Messiah our great Redeemer was baptized, *the Heavens were opened unto him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a Dove and lighting*

lighting upon him; and lo, a Voice from Heaven, Saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. (Mat. iii. 16, 17.)

When he was tranfigured before his Difciples, (viz. Peter, James and John,) *while he yet fpake, behold, a bright Cloud over fhadowed them; behold, a Voice out of the Cloud* (that is the Voice of God,) *which faid, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleafed, hear ye him.* Matt. xvii. 5.

It may, and it ought to be obferved, that our great Redeemer through the whole Courfe of his Life fhewed a continual Difregard to the Honours, the Riches and Pleafures of this World, and wholely employed himfelf in preaching the Gofpel, fhewing the People the Way to be faved, and teaching them thofe Things they fhould know, and believe and practife. Daily proving his Miffion from God, and confirming his Doctrine by numberlefs Miracles, cafting out Devils, raifing the Dead, and healing all Manner of Difeafes.

And in his laft Sufferings, when he was dying on the Crofs as a Sacrifice for us, *Behold, the Vail of the Temple was rent in twain, from the Top to the Bottom, and the Earth did quake, and the Rocks rent, and the Graves were opened, and many Bodies of Saints, which flept arofe, and come out of the Graves after his Refurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared* (not to a few but) *unto many.*

And when the Centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jefus, faw the Earthquake and thofe Things that were done, they feared greatly, faying, Truly this was the Son of God. (Matt. xxvii. 31, &c.)

Well, after he was dead Jofeph, a rich Man of Arimathea buried his Body, and laid it in his own new Tomb, which he had hewn out in the Rock, and rolled a great ftone to the Door of the Sepulchre.

The Enemies of Chrift remembred his Prediction of himfelf, *viz.* that he would rife again the third

third Day, and intreated Pilate to command the Sepulchre to be made ſure until the third Day, *And Pilate ſaid unto them ye have a Watch, go your Way, make it as ſure as you can, ſo they went and made the Sepulchre ſure, ſealing the Stone and ſetting a Watch.* (See *ver.* 63, *&c.*)

Vain Precautions! in *Matt.* xxviii. 2, *&c.* it is ſaid, *Behold, there was a great Earthquake; for the Angel of the Lord deſcended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the Stone from the Door, and ſet upon it. His Countenance was like Lightning, and his Raiment white as Snow. And for Fear of him the Keepers did ſhake, and became as dead Men. And the Angel anſwered and ſaid unto the Women* (mentioned *ver.* 1.) *Fear not ye, for I know, that ye ſeek Jeſus, which was crucified. He is not here, for he is riſen, as he ſaid. Come, ſee the Place where the Lord lay.* And after he was riſen from the Dead, he often appeared unto his Diſciples, and He did eat, and drink, and converſe with them. It is ſaid, *he ſhewed himſelf alive to his Apoſtles, by many infallible Proofs being ſeen of them forty Days, and ſpeaking of the Things partaining to the Kingdom of God.* Acts i. 3.

When he left this World, and had taken Leave of his Diſciples he did not go from them into a ſecret Place, and thence by himſelf alone aſcend up into Heaven: No, but as there were many Witneſſes of his Death, and of his Reſurrection, ſo likewiſe of his Aſcenſion into Heaven.

The Hiſtory of the Holy Jeſus written by *St.* Luke teſtifies, that *two of his Diſciples*, (Luke xxiv. 13.) *went the ſame Day* (in which our Lord roſe from the Dead) *to a Village called Emmaus*, and that our Lord joined himſelf to their Company, *(ver.* 15.) *and beginning at Moſes, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the Things concerning himſelf.* (ver. 27.)

That

That after Christ was gone from them, *they rose up the same Hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the Eleven* (Apostles) *and them that were with them.* (ver. 33.) That while this Company was together, *Jesus himself stood in the Midst of them, and discoursed with them.* (ver. 36.) &c. *And opened their Understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.* (ver. 45.) *And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lift up his Hands, and blessed them.* (ver. 50.) it is added, *And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.* (ver. 51.) Whence it appears, that the Apostles, and those who were with them, were Eye-Witnesses of our Lord's Ascension into Heaven.

In *Acts*, i. 4, 11. we are informed, that ~~when~~ our blessed Lord being assembled together with them, that is with his Apostles and Disciples, after he had concluded his Discourses with them, *while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight. And while they looked steadfastly towards Heaven, as he went up, behold two Men* (that is two Angels in the Likeness of Men,) *stood by them in* White Apparel, *which also said, ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven; shall so come, in like Manner, as ye have seen him go into Heaven.*

After this Glorious Event of Christ's Ascension into Heaven, his Prediction, and Promise of the Holy Ghost was fulfilled to the Apostles, (whom he had chosen to be his Witnesses,) while they staid in Jerusalem to be qualified for, and to be enabled to fulfil their Ministry and Apostleship.

For when *they were all with one Accord in one Place, suddenly, there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled all the House where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and sat*

upon

upon each of them. (that is on each of the Apoſtles,) *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance.* Acts ii. 1, &c.

And many Signs and Wonders were done by the Apoſtles, (Acts ii. 43.) who wrought many Miracles in Confirmation of their Teſtimony, and Doctrine in the ſeveral Cities and Countries into which they went preaching the Goſpel of Chriſt; Wherefore it is ſaid, *God alſo bearing them Witneſs both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own Will.* Heb. ii. 4.

I have now given myſelf a Pleaſure, and a Pleaſure to my Fellow-Chriſtians, who ſhall read this ſummary Account of the Glories of the Meſſiah, our only Saviour; the Conſideration of it, may confirm our Faith, eſtabliſh our Hope in Him, and increaſe our Reverence of, and our Love to him.

The Great, and the Holy God, has demonſtrated his Being, his Exiſtence, and his infinite Perfections two ways, *viz.*

By his Works of Creation; the Heavens declare his Glory, and the Firmament, and the vaſt Variety of Creatures ſhew his handy Work, and all proclaim his infinite Wiſdom and Power, and Goodneſs.

When I view the Heavens, and the Earth, the Sun, Moon and Stars, and the Manifold Kinds of Animals, and Vegetables, I conclude and I ought to conclude, (if I would reaſon rightly,) that there is a God, whoſe Wiſdom contrived, and whoſe Power brought them into Exiſtence.

And likewiſe by the Works of his Providence, he demonſtrates the ſame; eſpecially by his giving to us the Holy Scriptures, and the everlaſting Goſpel, God has manifeſted his Being, and his Glory.

The Doctrines, and Laws, of the Old Testament, and the Gospel revealed more clearly in the New, are ratified, or proved to be from God, by a wonderful Constructure of Predictions, and by the Accomplishment of them.

And likewise when I read the Holy Scriptures, and the Prophesies of the Events many Years, and some of them many Ages future, and how exactly the Things foretold have come to pass, I conclude that there is a God, and that our Bible contain his Word, or the Revelation of his Will, and that the Doctrines of both the Testaments are certainly true.

Because if there was not a Foreknowledge of future Events, there could be no Prophesies of them; if there was not a God who foreknew his own Acts, what himself would do, and what he would permit, or prevent, and whose Power over-rules all Creatures, and all their Actions, Predictions could not be fulfilled. But as we are certain that the Prophesies, recorded in the Holy Scriptures have very many of them been fulfilled, and that others are fulfilling, so we are certain that there is a God, and as certain that the Gospel is true.

And that in Christian Countries, Unbelievers, those Infidels have no Excuse.

How God will deal with the Heathens, with Nations that never heard the joyful Sound of the Gospel, we Christians know not; only we know that *The Judge of all the Earth will do right: And that in every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness is accepted with him.* (Acts x. 35.)

But as for those who live in a Country, where the Gospel is preached, and where the People have the Holy Scriptures, and may read them if

they will, we know how God will deal with them.

The Holy Jesus said to the Jews, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your Sins.* (John viii. 24.) which proves that the Unbelievers, if they continue such, can never escape everlasting Destruction.

Unbelivers, reject Christ from being their King; they will not have this Man to reign over them: But that Time will surely come, when this King will appoint them to be destroyed. *But those mine Enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.* Luke xix. 21.

Are there not Infidels in this Age, Persons who do not and will not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and the promised Saviour? And may not those Predictions of his justly fill them with Dread? They may.

And so may those Predictions, recorded (2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9.) where the Apostle foretells that *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty* ~~*Angles*~~ Angels, *in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.*

These Predictions may well excite in rational Minds the most amazing Fears, if they are guilty of disbelieving the Gospel of Christ; because their reasoning Faculty renders them capable of considering the Evidence of true Propositions, and thereby of receiving Conviction of the Truth of the Gospel.

And if they are not convinced of the most plain, and most important Truths, it is because they will not consider the Evidence of them.

If

If a Man at Noon Day, with a clear Sky, ſhall ſay the Sun does not ſhine, and that there is no ſuch Thing as the Sun, he either is blind, or belies his Senſes, and either he has no Reaſon, or knowingly contradicts it.

And thus if a Man ſhall ſay, the Goſpel of Chriſt is not true, (ſince Chriſt by many infallible Proofs has eſtabliſhed it,) he ſpeaks and acts againſt Reaſon in rejecting it.

What the Holy Jeſus ſaid of the Jews, is applicable to theſe Unbelievers. In John xv. 24. the bleſſed Jeſus ſaid of them; *If I had not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin; but now have they both ſeen and hated me and my Father.* And it may be ſaid of the Infidels (who have the Goſpel among them, and will not believe it,) that they have Sin, and no Cloke for their Sin.

They ſhut their Eyes and will not ſee, but they ſhall ſee, and be aſhamed, as it is ſaid; Iſa. xxvi. 17. and it may be very ſoon: For when Death comes, tho' it cloſes the Eyes of their Bodies, it will open the Eyes of their Minds: And then they will ſee that the Holy Scriptures are indeed the Word of God, and that the Goſpel came from God, publiſhing and offering Salvation to all Sorts of Sinners, by Jeſus Chriſt: Then they will ſee the Worth of their Souls, and the Excellency of the Happineſs purchaſed by Chriſt, and offered to them, and refuſed by them.

O what Horror, what Diſtreſs filled the Mind of St. Paul, when Jeſus of Nazareth appeared to him in the Way, as he went to Damaſcus, and when he found that juſt One, whom the Jews had crucified, both Lord and Chriſt!

But how much greater Horrors, and even a dreadful and irremoveable Deſpair join'd with

them, will fill the Souls of the Infidels, as ſoon as they are taken from their Bodies, by an Angry and a Sin-revenging God!

Theſe Infidels are more guilty, and their Guilt more aggravated than that of the Devils.

The Devils believe that Jeſus of Nazareth is the Son of God, and the Saviour of Men; they believe all the Facts relating to him, mentioned in the Holy Scriptures.

But the Infidels deny them; and their Guilt is the more heinous, as Chriſt came into the World on purpoſe not to ſave the Devils, but the ſinful Children of Men. And as the whole Series of his Actions, were Acts of Pity, of Love manifeſted both to the Bodies and Souls of Men, as he came to purchaſe the Pardon of Sins, Peace with God, and everlaſting Felicity for all that would become his Diſciples.

O Merciful God, awaken the Conſciences of thoſe deſperate Sinners; bring them to believe that Faith which they have hitherto been labouring to deſtroy! Bring them to read, and conſider what the bleſſed Jeſus ſays, (in *Matt.* x. 32, 33.) *whoſoever therefore ſhall confeſs me before Men, him will I confeſs alſo before my Father, which is in Heaven. But whoſoever ſhall deny me before Men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in Heaven.*

Theſe Words ſhould engage us not only to believe in Chriſt, but readily to own and acknowledge him to be our Redeemer, in whom we truſt for Salvation, and they ſhould reſtrain us from denying him.

In *Mark* viii. 36, 37, 38. Chriſt ſays, *For what ſhall it profit a Man, if he gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? or what ſhall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul? Whoever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my Words* (which

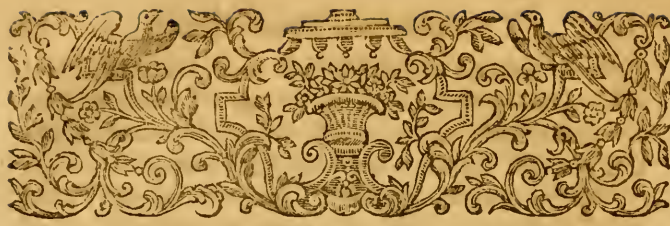
(which include his Doctrines and Laws,) *in this adulterous, and Sinful Generations, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels.*

These Sayings of Christ import not only that the Unbelievers, but also that those Professors of his Gospel, who to avoid Sufferings, or to gain any Worldly Advantage, shall either deny Christ, or be ashamed of him, or his Words and Doctrines, are appointed to inexpressible and everlasting Punishments, they lose their own Souls, and all the Happiness purchased by Christ, and offered to Sinners by the Gospel, and are not to be reckoned real Christians.

But though Men in Words may own Christ, and call themselves Christians, yet if they live in allowed Disobedience to the Rules of his Gospel, they are not sincere Christians. In *Tit.* i. 6. The Apostle says, *They profess that they know God, but in Works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good Work reprobate.*

Thus it appears from infallible Proofs, that Jesus of Nazareth who was born of the Virgin Mary, who led a Life of Sufferings and Sorrows, who was crucified and put to Death under Pontius Pilate, and who rose again from the Dead the third Day; is Christ, the promised Saviour.

I have said thus much concerning the Sin of Unbelief, and of Professors being ashamed to own Christ, and his Gospel, to warn People against complying with any Temptations, which may incline them to be guilty of those Crimes.



LETTER IV.

Containing Remarks on ſome Parts of the Holy Scriptures, by which Perſons may know themſelves, whether they are ſincere Chriſtians, to whom the predicted Bleſſings do belong: And of their being in Covenant with God, and having the Holy Spirit dwelling in them: Likewiſe of the different Manner, in which the Holy Spirit bringeth Perſons to be ſincere Chriſtians.

I Shall now take Notice of ſome Parts of the Holy Scriptures from which we may know, who are real, ſerious Chriſtians.

In *Matt.* x. 3. the Holy Jeſus ſays, *Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:* Therefore they who are not converted, and do not become as little Children, are not real, and ſerious Chriſtians; becauſe ſincere Chriſtians have many Promiſes, which are a ſolid Ground of Aſſurance that they ſhall be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another plain Concluſion may be added, *viz.* that therefore the Miniſters of Chriſt, ſhould explain, and prove the Neceſſity of that Converſion, which Chriſt ſpeaks of.

In *John* iii. 3, 5. Chrift the glorious Teacher, who came down from Heaven, fays, *Except a Man be born again he cannot fee the Kingdom of God. Except a Man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* Therefore they who are not born again, born of Water, and of the Spirit, are not to be reckoned fincere Chriftians.

And therefore the Minifters of Chrift fhould explain the Nature, and preach the Neceffity of being born again, according to our Saviour's Doctrine.

In 2 *Cor.* v. 17: It is faid, *If any Man be in Chrift, he is a new Creature, old Things are paft away, behold all Things are become new.* Therefore, they who are not new Creatures, they in whom the old Things are not paft away, and in whom all Things are not become new, are not ferious, or real Chriftians: And therefore alfo the Minifters of Chrift fhould explain, and preach the Doctrine of the new Creature, and of the paffing away of the old Things, and of the Nature, and Neceffity of all Things becoming new.

True Chriftians are diftinguifhed from others by their receiving Chrift, and trufting in him, In *John* i. 12, It is faid, *But as many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them, that believe on his Name.*

The Devils believe that Chrift is the Saviour of Men, and believe what is related in the Gofpels of his Birth, of his Doctrines, Miracles, Sufferings, Death and Refurrection, but they do not receive Chrift; He was not offered to them.

True Believers receive him as their Saviour, and Prince, and confent to be fubject to his Authority, and obedient to his Laws; and they truft in him for his great Salvation.

St.

St. Paul ſpeaking of Chriſt, ſays, to the heathen Converts at Epheſus, *In whom alſo we have obtained an Inheritance, being predeſtinated according to the Purpoſe of him, who worketh all Things after the Counſel of his own Will: That we (q. d.* we Jews*) ſhould be to the Praiſe of his Glory, who firſt truſted in Chriſt.*

In whom ye (Gentiles) *alſo truſted after that ye heard the Word of Truth, the Goſpel of your Salvation: In whom alſo, after that ye believed ye were ſealed with that Holy Spirit of Promiſe.* Eph. i. 11, 12, 13.

True Believers, ſerious Chriſtians, are diſtinguiſhed by their *Love* to Chriſt, and their keeping his Commandments. *Unto you therefore which believe, He,* (that is Chriſt) *is precious,* ſays the Apoſtle, (1 Pet. ii. 7.) Therefore they to whom Chriſt is not precious, are not true Believers, or ſincere Chriſtians.

The ſame Apoſtle ſpeaking of Chriſt unto Believers, ſays, *Whom having not ſeen, ye love; in whom though now ye ſee him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.* (1 Pet. 8. i.)

Divine Love with its happy Fruits, is the fulfilling of the Law.

In Deut. vi. 5. it is ſaid, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.*

So in Matt. xxii. 37. which implies that ſincere Love to God is eſſential to true Piety.

In John xiv. 21. the bleſſed Jeſus ſaid, *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, ſhall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifeſt myſelf unto him,* and ver. 24. he ſays, *He that loveth me not, keepeth not my Sayings.*

Whence

Whence it is evident, that they who truly love Chrift, do keep his Commandments; and that they who live in Difobedience to them, do not fincerely love him, whatfoever they may profefs; and they are not real Chriftians.

In John viii. 42. Jefus faid to the Jews, *If God were your Father, ye would love me: For I proceeded forth, and came from God.* Therefore they who do not love Chrift have not God for their Father, and are not real Chriftians.

I would further obferve that real Chriftians, are Perfons in *Covenant* with God. There is an holy Agreement, or Covenant between the great God and them: It is the Way, the Almighty has inftituted of dealing with his beloved People: God made a Covenant with Noah. For it is faid, *God fpake unto Noah, and his Sons with him, faying, And I, behold, I eftablifh my Covenant with you, and with your Seed after you*; Gen. ix. 8, 9.

God alfo made a Covenant with Abraham. We read in Gen. xvii. 1, 2. that, *The Lord appeared unto Abram, and faid unto him, I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect, And I will make my Covenant between me, and thee.*

Here are two Engagements in this folemn Covenant, *viz.* 1. God's gracious Promife to be Abraham's God, which implies the greateft Happinefs and Honour, and alfo Abraham's Obligation to walk (or live) before God according to his Will, with Uprightnefs of Heart: 2. Abraham's Confent to walk as God required. And thus there was a mutual Agreement or Covenant between God and Abraham.

Frequent Mention is made throughout the Old Teftament of God's Covenant: David in a Pfalm of thankfgiving, faid, *He is the Lord our God, his Judgments are in all the Earth, be ye mindful al-*

ways of his Covenant: The Word which he has commanded to a Thousand Generations, 1 Chron. xvi. 14, 15.

In *Psal.* xxv. 15. It is said, *The Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.* He will make known to them, who are truly pious, some of his secret Purposes; and the Blessedness of their being in Covenant with him; but unto the Wicked God saith, *What has thou to do to declare my Statutes, or that thou shouldest take my Covenant in thy Mouth?* Psal. l. 16.

Which plainly implies that the Wicked have no Interest in God's Covenant, and that he did not approve of their being Teachers of his Laws.

In *Isaiah* xlii. 5, 6. we read, *Thus saith God the Lord*, (that is to the Messiah) *I the Lord have called thee in Righteousness, and will hold thine Hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a Covenant of the People, for a Light of the Gentiles.*

These Words import that God's Covenant with his People was intended to continue, not only till Christ came, but through the Times of the Gospel.

In *Jer.* xi. 1—4. It is written, *The Word that came to Jeremiah from the* LORD, *saying Hear, ye the Words of this Covenant, and speak unto the Men of Judah, and to the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, and say thou unto them, Thus saith the* LORD GOD *of Israel, cursed be the Man, that obeyeth not the Words of this Covenant, which I commanded your Fathers in the Day that I brought them forth out of the Land of Egypt, from the Iron Furnace, saying, Obey my Voice and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my People, and I will be your God.*

Hence

Hence do appear the mutual Engagements between God, and his People in the Holy COVENANT, viz. on the People's Part, God commanded them to obey his Voice, and keep all his Commandments, and this the People consented, and promised to do.

They expressed to Moses their Consent, *Exod.* xxiv. 3. *All the People answered with one Voice, and said, All the Words which the* LORD *hath said will we do.*

In ver. the 7th, we read. *And he* (i. e. Moses) *took the Book of the Covenant, and read in the Audience of the People, and they said; all that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient.*

This Engagement the People entered into:

On the Part of God, he consented to, and by Promise agreed that they should be his People, and himself would be their God.

It is likewise evident, that they who will not obey the Words of God's Covenant, and keep his Holy Commandments are *Cursed.*

God still deals with Men in the Way of a Covenant: Our glorious Redeemer is called by the Prophet Malachi, the Messenger of the Covenant, when he spake of the Messiah's Coming into the second Temple, *Mal.* iii. 1. where it is said, *Behold I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the Way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his Temple; even the Messenger of the* COVENANT *whom ye delight in; Behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

And in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he is declared to be the Mediator of the Covenant, (which under the Dispensation of the Gospel, is called a new Covenant, *Heb.* viii. 6. where the Apostle says, *But now hath he* (that is Christ) *obtained a more excellent Ministry*, (that is better than the Ministry of Moses,) *by how much also he is the*

Mediator of a better Covenant, which was eſtabliſhed upon better Promiſes.

In *Heb.* xiii. 20, 21. the Apoſtle ſays, *now the God of Peace that brought again from the Dead our Lord Jeſus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well pleaſing in his Sight, through Jeſus Chriſt; to whom be Glory for ever, and ever Amen.*

Hence it appears that the Covenant of which Chriſt is the Mediator is an everlaſting Covenant, ratified, and made ſure by the ſhedding of his precious Blood for us on the Croſs.

And all real Chriſtians do devote themſelves to God in Covenant; they deſire to have the Lord for their God, their Lawgiver, their Portion and Happineſs, and in the name of Chriſt give themſelves to be his Servants; they deſire to have Chriſt as the Mediator between God and them, they deſire to have the Lord Jeſus in all his Offices, and truſt in him alone for all the Salvation they want; and they deſire the Holy Spirit may dwell in them as a Sanctifier, and work in them both to will and to do, and to be always their Guide, and their Comforter.

Thus they do conſent to be the Lord, and to live according to his Holy Will.

And all the Promiſes of the Goſpel, ſhew God's conſent to be their God; and thus it appears, that there is a mutual Agreement, or Covenant between the Holy God, and all ſincere Chriſtians.

There is another Thing to be obſerved as to real Chriſtians, true Believers and of the utmoſt Importance, viz. that they have the *Holy Spirit dwelling in them*; they were born of the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit abideth in them.

The Predictions on Record in the Old Testament are a solid Ground for the People of God under that Dispensation, and for all true Believers under the Gospel, for expecting the great Blessing and Dignity of having the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

In Ezek. xxxvi. 27. The God of Truth says, *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my Statues, and ye shall keep my Judgments, and do them.* A precious Promise! Which may comfort the Hearts of the Saints when they meet with Difficulties in the Way of their Duty; and may well encourage them when they meet with the Temptations, and Buffettings of the Devil.

And this great Blessing, the In-dwelling of God's Holy Spirit we should pray for it; and we are incouraged to do so, by the Words of our gracious Redeemer, in Luke xi. 13. where he says, *If ye then being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children: How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

In John vii. 38, 39. Christ says, *He that believeth on me, as the Scriptures hath said, out of his Belly shall flow Rivers of living Water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.*

In John xiv. 17. the blessed Jesus, speaking of the Holy Ghost, says, *Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the World cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: But ye* (said Christ to his Disciples) *know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

In Gal. iii. 14. the Apostle says, *That the Blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the Promise of the Spirit* (or the Spirit promised) *through Faith.*

Whence

Whence it appears, that they who have the Faith which the Gospel requires, have also received the Holy Spirit.

In 2 Tim. i. 14. the Apostle says to Timothy, *That good Thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.*

The Sacred Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, speak abundantly of the Holy Spirit: David earnestly prayed, that God would not take his Holy Spirit from him.

where See Psa. li. 11, 12. ~~when~~ he prays thus, *Cast me not out from thy Presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.*

And in like Manner we should pray, that God will not take his Holy Spirit from us; but continually uphold us with his free Spirit.

The Offices which the Holy Spirit performs for the Conversion of Sinners, and fitting them for everlasting Happiness in Mansions of Glory, are manifold, are excellent, and most important.

He worketh (I doubt not) in the Souls of all Men, that hear the Gospel preached. He awakens their Consciences, he convinces them of Sin, and makes known to them, that God in his great Love has provided a Saviour, and a Saviour who is both able and willing to save all Sorts of Sinners, even the Chief of them: And if they remain in Unbelief, and go on in a Course of Disobedience to God, it is because they resist the Holy Ghost.

What the Martyr Stephen said to the stubborn unbelieving Jews, Acts vii. 51. *Ye Stiff necked, and uncircumcised in Heart and Ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost*, may be said to stubborn Unbelievers, who have Gospel preached to them.

The unbelieving Jews being charged with resisting the Holy Ghost, is an Evidence that the Holy

Holy Ghoſt had been working on their Minds to become the Diſciples of Chriſt.

The Holy Spirit performs the Offices of a Teacher, a Remembrancer, a Sanctifier, and a Comforter to all, who believe on the Lord Jeſus. The Holy Spirit gave to the Apoſtles thoſe wonderful Gifts, which they received at Pentecoſt: He enabled them to ſpeak with Tongues, and gave them Utterance in Preaching the everlaſting Goſpel; he enabled them to confirm their Teſtimony of Chriſt, and the Doctrines they taught by a Series of Miracles thro' a Courſe of many Years, and in many Countries at the ſame Time: Chriſt purchaſed a great Salvation for Sinners, and the Holy Spirit makes the Appication of it.

And his OPERATIONS prove that he is truly God.

For the Effects of his working could not be produced by any Creature.

One Man cannot communicate his Wiſdom or Sagacity to another: Or a Man ſtrong in Body, cannot communicate the like Strength to a Perſon whoſe Body is little and weak:

Neither can an Angel make any Creature:

But the Holy Spirit maketh new Creatures in Chriſt.

He turneth Sinners into Saints; which no Angel in Heaven can do.

His Operations prove him to be God, the third Perſon of the Sacred Trinity.

And the Words of the Apoſtle Peter in Acts v. 3, 4. do make known his Deity, when he ſays to Ananias on the Account of his ſpeaking a Lie, *Why hath Satan filled thy Heart to lie to the Holy Ghoſt;* —— *thou haſt not lied unto Men, but unto God.*

Ananias's

Ananias's lying to the Holy Ghoſt, was a lying unto God; which could not be unleſs the Holy Ghoſt is God.

And the Words of our bleſſed Saviour, in Matt. xii. 31, 32, are ſolemn and moſt awful, and require our ſpecial Notice. *I ſay unto you*, (that is unto the People preſent,) *All manner of Sin, and Blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto Men; but the Blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, ſhall not be forgiuen unto Men. And whoſoever ſhall ſpeak a Word againſt the Son of Man, it ſhall be forgiven him*; (on his Repentance) *but whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in that which is to come.*

Let thoſe who deride the Operations of the Holy Ghoſt; thoſe who make a Mock of his Workings in the Souls of Men, and they who deny his Being, think on theſe Words which are tremendous Predictions of our bleſſed Saviour, and will be fulfilled.

The Work of Men's Redemption, by the Recovery of them from their State of Sin and Miſery, and bringing them into a State of Holineſs, and fitting them for the perfect Enjoyment of God for ever, is a moſt glorious Work! There is much Myſtery in it: The Holy Angels deſire to look unto it.

And for our Parts, we Chriſtians ſee, but ſee as through a Glaſs darkly; yet we ſee, and know ſo much by the Goſpel, that if we believe in Chriſt, and ſhew our Faith, by Living according to the Rules of his Goſpel we ſhall go to be with Chriſt, when we ſhall be taken out of this World.

But there is much imported in ſeveral Parts of the ſacred Revelation, which we cannot dive into.

There

There ſeems to have been ſomething excellent in Man's Nature before the Fall, which we are ignorant of.

The Condeſcention of the great and Holy God, his Pity and Love to ſuch Apoſtate Creatures as the Offſpring of Adam are, is amazing!

Only we know that there is nothing in us to deſerve his Compaſſion, and that the Lord our Creator is gracious only becauſe he will be gracious.

God the Father loved the World, loved our Race of Creatures, and contrived our Redemption; and ſent his only begotten and beloved Son to purchaſe and accompliſh it.

God the Son condeſcended to come down from Heaven, and take into Union with himſelf our Nature, and to ſatisfy vindictive Juſtice, by the Sacrifice of himſelf on the Croſs, and to work out a perfect Righteouſneſs for our Juſtification.

And God the Holy Ghoſt undertook to make Application of the Redemption purchaſed by Chriſt: Stupendious Mercy and Goodneſs!

Now let the Father, and the Son,
And Spirit be ador'd:
Where there are Works to make him known,
Or Saints to love the Lord.
Watts's Hymns, p. 312.

And let all ſerious Chriſtians keep in Remembrance, that the Holy Spirit dwelleth in them. *Know ye not* (ſays the Apoſtle,) *that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any Man defile the Temple of God, him ſhall God deſtroy; for the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple ye are.* 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

We ſhould cheriſh in our Minds ſuch a Senſe, of the Honour, of the Dignity and Happineſs

of being the Temple of God, and having his Holy Spirit dwelling in us, as may render us watchful to avoid every Thing that is Sinful and Polluting, and to ſhun all Temptations.

We may conclude from what has been collected out of the Holy Scriptures into theſe Papers; that there is a great Change wrought in every real Chriſtian, by the Spirit of God. And every ſincere Chriſtian can teſtify, as to himſelf that an Holy Change has been made in him.

His Conſcience bears him witneſs, that his Mind has been convinced of the ſinful Depravity of his Nature, and of the Odiouſneſs of Sin, and of his Want of a Saviour; and that his Underſtanding has been enlighened to ſee the Truth of the Goſpel, and that his Will has been ſo changed, that although he once was thoughtleſs of what would become of his Soul, and regardleſs of the Favour of God; of an Intereſt in Chriſt, and in the Covenant of Grace; yet that his Will has been ſo wrought upon, as to choſe the Lord for his God, Chriſt for his Saviour, and the Holy Spirit for his Sanctifier; and ſo as to reject, and renounce all his former Sins, and the Devil and all his Temptations to go on in a Courſe of Sin: And his Conſcience bears him Witneſs, that although formerly he loved this World chiefly, and the Things of it, the Honours, or the Riches, or the Pleaſures of it, yet that now he loves God above all, that he loves the Redeemer, and loves all his Commandments, his Sabbaths, his Ordinances, and all who love the Lord Jeſus in Sincerity, of every Denomination.

And he experiences a great and happy Change, as in his Heart, ſo in his Life and Converſation, for although formerly he was regardleſs of his Duty, negligent of the Worſhip

of

of God in Secret, in the Family, and in the publick Aſſemblies on the Lord's Day.

He now makes Conſcience of thoſe, and all other Duties; and although formerly his chief Satisfaction was in vain Company, and in ſenſual Pleaſures, yet now he has a greater Value for Perſons truly pious, and has more eſteem for the Saints, thoſe excellent Ones of the Earth, as they are called. *Pſalm* xvi. 3.

He now exerciſes himſelf to have always a Conſcience void of Offence, both towards God, and towards all Men.

Every ſince Chriſtian has experienced a Holy Change wrought in him, and it was wrought by the Holy Spirit: But the Holy Spirit worketh differently in different Perſons.

Some have been born of religious Parents, and have had a pious Education, have been brought up in the Nature and Admonition of the Lord, and been kept to a conſtant Attendance on the publick Worſhip of God, under the Preaching of the Goſpel; and on ſome of theſe the Holy Spirit, gradually and as it were by inſenſible Degrees produces the Holy Change; ſo that they cannot tell the Month or Day, when they performed the firſt Act of true Faith, and became united to Chriſt; but on examining themſelves, they may obſerve the Effects of the happy Change, and the Fruits and Evidences of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

Sometimes notorious Sinners, Perſons, who have led profligate Lives, to the Scandal of the Chriſtian Profeſſion, have by the juſt Providence of God been brought into great Diſtreſs and Want; like the Prodigal Son, or have been afflicted with ſome violent Diſtemper, or other great Calamity, and then the Holy Ghoſt has awakened their Conſciences; and put their Sins in

Order before their Eyes, brought them to ſee their preſent Miſery and their Danger of greater; then the Holy Spirit fills their Souls with Anguiſh inexpreſſible, and influences them to cry out, What ſhall I do to be ſaved? and then they ſee their Want of a Refuge to which they may fly; and then does the Holy Spirit open the Eyes of their Mind to ſee the Mighty, and compaſſionate Saviour, and encourages the trembling Souls, to fly to Chriſt, both for Salvation and Comfort.

The Prophet ſpoke of the bleſſed Jeſus when he ſaid, (Iſa. xxxii. 2.) *A Man ſhall an hiding Place from the Wind, and a Cover from the Tempeſt, as Rivers of Water in a dry Place, as the Shadow of a great Rock in a weary Land.*

By this figurative, or metaphorical Deſcription of our Redeemer, we may learn the Miſery of guilty Sinners, as obnoxious to the Storms and Tempeſts of Divine Wrath, and likewiſe the all-ſufficient Help, the Safety and Comfort, that are to be found in Chriſt.

And when the Holy Spirit reveals Chriſt to the amazed, and ſelf abhoring, and ſelf condemning Sinner, and thus ſuggeſts to him; *believe in the* Lord Jesus, *and thou ſhalt be ſaved.* How does the poor Heart begin to rejoice? How is it agitated between Hope and Fear? How is it amazed with the glad Tidings that there is a Saviour, and a Saviour able and willing to ſave him! O can ſuch a Wretch as I have been, be ſaved? Is the Holy God, againſt whom I have rebelled ſo many Years, willing to pardon me, and willing to be reconciled to me! And is the bleſſed Jeſus whom I have ſo often ſlighted, and diſregarded, and ſo often reſiſted his Government, is he willing to ſave me after all the Indignities and Provocations which I have been guilty of?

Amazing Grace: Aſtoniſhing Mercy!

Bleſſed

Bleſſed Jeſus I believe, thou art the Son of God, and the Saviour, and the only Saviour of Men: Lord help mine Unbelief! O ſave me, ſave me, or I periſh! I fly to thee for Refuge, from all the Vengeance I am obnoxious to! O Jeſus of Nazareth, thou Son of David, thou bleſſed Son of God have Mercy on me! Is not thy Name called Jeſus, becauſe thou ſaveſt thy People from their Sins? O ſave me from all my Sins, and from all the Puniſhment and Miſeries which my Sins have deſerved;

Lord if thou wilt, thou can'ſt make my filthy Soul clean; my ignorant Soul wiſe unto Salvation! I renounce my Sins, and I give up myſelf to thee, to be thy Diſciple and Servant:

Shew Pity, Lord, O Lord forgive,
Let a repenting Rebel live:
Are not thy Mercies large and free?
May not a Sinner truſt in Thee?

My Crimes are great, but not ſurpaſs
The Power, and Glory of thy Grace:
O waſh my Soul from every Sin,
And make my guilty Conſcience clean:

O ſave a trembling Sinner, Lord,
Whoſe Hope ſtill hovering round thy Word,
Would light on ſome ſweet Promiſe there,
Some ſure Support againſt Deſpair.

Watt's Pſal. 51.

Thus the Holy Spirit ſometimes makes Converts, among thoſe who have lived diſſolute Lives; and happy Fruits of it, ſoon appear: For they immediately diſcard their old Companions in Sin; they who ſeldom went to the Houſe of God to join in the Worſhip of him, now are conſtantly there: Now many of their former

former Acquaintance deride them, and now all pious Persons, who know any thing of them rejoice in their Conversion. Such a Convert may say,

When God revealed his gracious Name,
And chang'd my sinful State,
My Rapture seem'd a pleasing Dream,
The Grace appear'd so great.

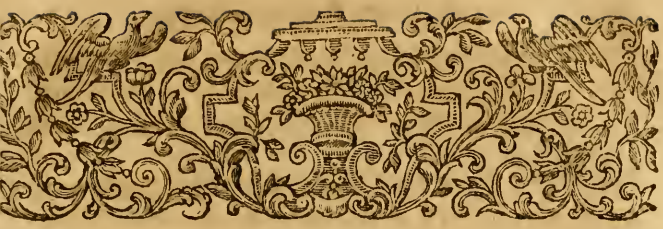
The World beheld the glorious Change,
And did his Hand confess,
My Tongue broke out in unknown Strains,
And sung surprizing Grace.

Great is the Work, my Neighbours cry'd,
And own'd the Power Divine;
Great is the Work, my Heart reply'd,
And be the Glory Thine.
Watt's Psalms, Psal. 126.

And how thankful are such Converts, for the holy and happy Change of their Condition, and thankful even for the Afflictions which were the Means of it: Such a Christian can say,

Father, I bless thy chast'ning Hand;
How kind was thy rebuking Rod,
Which forc'd my Conscience to a Stand,
And brought my wand'ring Soul to God!

Foolish and vile, I went astray,
E'er I had felt thy Scourges, Lord,
I left my Guide, and lost my Way;
But now I love, and keep thy Word.
Watt's Psalms, Psal. 110.



LETTER V.

On the Predictions, of the great Bleſſings, which in this Life are beſtowed on every Believer; viz. *Juſtification, Adoption, and Sanctification*; *Bleſſings abſolutely neceſſary to the Safety, the Comfort, and Happineſs of every Man*; *and which import a great Variety of Benefits*; *even Afflictions are intended as a Means to promote the Holineſs, and the future Happineſs of Chriſtians*; *and likewiſe of Predictions, encouraging Backſliders to return unto God.*

I Shall now proceed more particularly to conſider thoſe PREDICTIONS of the Bleſſings, which are given to ſincere Chriſtians in this Life; but muſt obſerve that there are no Predictions of Immunity to them from Troubles in this World, but ſeveral of Afflictions in this Life, which therefore they ſhould expect.

It is ſaid, Man that is born of a Woman is of few Days, and full of Trouble. Job xiv. 1.

And it is ſaid, Pſal. xxxiv. 19. Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous, but it is there foretold, that the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

Our

Our bleſſed Saviour foretold to his Diſciples; that Troubles would befal them; for in John xvi. 32. he ſaid to them, *In the World ye ſhall have Tribulation.*

In Heb. xii. 6. it is ſaid, *Whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every Son whom he receiveth*, and ver. 8. *But if ye be without chaſtiſement, whereof all are Partakers, then are ye Baſtards, and not Sons.*

Yet notwithſtanding all the Troubles and Afflictions, which true Believers meet with in this Life, it will appear from the Predictions of Bleſſings relating to them, that they are truly happy, and the only Perſons that are ſo in this World, as well as in the next: Particularly from the following.

I. Prediction. JUSTIFICATION is one of the Bleſſings purchaſed by Chriſt, and revealed in his Goſpel, and is that Act of God by which he accepts of a Sinner as righteous in his Sight, and forgives all his Sins, and becomes reconciled to him: And this Act of Divine Grace is predicted; It is foretold that they ſhould be juſtified, and pardoned.

In *Iſa.* xlv. 25. it is ſaid, *In the Lord* (that is, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt) *ſhall all the Seed of Iſrael be juſtified, and ſhall glory*, that is, all the ſpiritual Seed, all who truly believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, ſhall be juſtified in him by Faith; and in *Iſa.* liii. 11. it is ſaid, *By his Knowledge ſhall my righteous Servant juſtify many; for he ſhall bear their Iniquities.* (*i. e.* the Puniſhment, which their Iniquities deſerved.)

In Acts xiii. 39. it is ſaid, *By him, all that believe are juſtified from all Things, from which ye could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes.*

The Apoſtle Paul ſays, *Rom.* v. 1. *Being juſtified by Faith, we have peace with God through our*

our Lord Jesus Christ; and ver. 9. *Being justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath through him.*

In Tit. iii. 7. *That being justified by his Grace, we should be made Heirs, according to the Hope of eternal Life.*

It appears from the Texts now cited,

1. That Men are justified by Faith: And therefore as soon as Sinners truly believe in Christ, they are justified.

2. That no Persons are justified by a Course of evangelical Obedience persisted in till their Death; for if Justification was to be obtained in that Way, Men could not be justified and their Sins pardoned, till that Course of Obedience should be compleated; and till then, they would remain under Condemnation by God's Law, and destitute of the Pardon of their Sins, and of a solid Ground for Peace and Comfort in their Consciences.

Miserable Comforters are they who preach such Doctrine; but the Gospel assures us that we are justified by Faith, that is, as soon as we believe.

3. That they who believe have the Pardon of their Sins, a Discharge from Condemnation, Peace with God, and are made Heirs of God.

There is therefore now no Condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom. viii. 1.

The Prediction of the Blessing of Justification to them who believe, and the Accomplishment of it, shews that sincere Christians are brought into a very happy Condition.

Before their Faith in Christ, they were under a dreadful Sentence of Condemnation to everlasting Punishments and Miseries: Not one of their numberless Sins was pardoned; but the wretched Persons were Objects of God's Wrath and Curse,

and they were obnoxious to the Pains of Hell for ever, till they believe.

They that remain in a State of Unbelief, and of wilful Disobedience to the Holy, and good God, do remain in a miserable Condition! A Condition, miserable beyond Expression, and beyond Thought; and no Honours, no Dignities, in this World, no stately Houses, no great Estates, no large Possessions, nor Heaps of Riches, nor all the Pleasures of Sense, can render their Condition better.

In the Midst of the greatest Affluence of earthly Felicities, they are but condemned Malefactors in the Sight of God; and the Lord the Judge of all, may unexpectedly send Death the Executioner to take them away, and remove them to be among the Devils, who are reserved in Chains under Darkness against the Judgment of the great Day.

But as soon as any Sinner by a Faith unfeigned closes with Christ, be he high or low, or rich, or poor, he is immediately freed from the Guilt of all his Sins; the Sentence of his Condemnation is cancelled; all his Iniquities are forgiven; the Holy, and offended God is at Peace with him, and reconciled to him, and he is justified in his Sight.

But how is it, that a Sinner is justified?

This indeed is a Question, and a Question of the utmost Moment; and the Gospel answers it.

That it is by Faith; by Faith as the Instrument, or Means, and by Faith alone.

St. Paul says, *not by Works of Righteousness, which we have done.* Titus iii. 5.

Therefore by the Deeds of the Law, there shall no Flesh be justified in his Sight, (that is in the Sight of God,) for by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin, Rom. iii. 20. as if he had said, No Man

Man by performing the Deeds, which the Law requires, ſhall be juſtified; becauſe by examining his Courſe of Life, and all his Actions by the Law, he will know himſelf guilty of many Sins, notwithſtanding the Number of Duties he may have performed.

And ver. 9. the Apoſtle takes Notice, that they had before proved both Jews, and Gentiles, that they are all under Sin; (that is under the Guilt and Curſe of Sin.)

But what is Righteouſneſs? It may be replied to this Queſtion, that Righteouſneſs in a rational Creature, Righteouſneſs in a Man is that Courſe of Life, and Actions, which conſiſts in the Performance of the Duties he owes to God, to himſelf, and to his Fellow Creatures, and in a total Abſtinence from every Thing, which God has forbidden.

If there is a Neglect of any of the Duties commanded, or a Doing any Thing that is forbidden by the Divine Law, that Man's Righteouſneſs is imperfect, and the more numerous his Omiſſions of Duty, and his Tranſgreſſions are in doing the Things forbidden, the more imperfect it is.

If his Righteouſneſs was perfect for a Courſe of Years, yet that Righteouſneſs could make no Amends for the Sins committed before that Courſe was begun: But there is no ſuch Thing as a perfect Courſe of Righteouſneſs performed by any Man through the Space of one Year, or Month, or Day; and an imperfect Righteouſneſs can never make any Man to appear perfectly righteous in the Sight of the Holy God.

Therefore no Man can be juſtified by the Duties he performs.

We may well ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *If thou, Lord, ſhouldeſt mark Iniquities, O Lord who ſhall*

ſtand? Pſal. cxxx. 3. And we may ſay to God with David. *Pſal.* cxliii. 1, 2. *Hear my Prayer, O Lord! ——and enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, for in thy Sight ſhall no Man living be juſtified*, that is by his own Deeds.

We have Reaſon to confeſs to God, and ſay *Iſa.* lxiv. 6. *we are all as an unclean Thing, and all our Righteouſneſſes are as filthy Rags.*

And therefore no Man has any Ground to expect Juſtification in the Sight of the All-ſeeing God, by his own Righteouſneſs.

If we conſider the manifold Defects in our Obedience; and how our beſt Services are polluted with Mixtures of Sin, we ſhall ſee abundant Reaſon to admire the Grace and Goodneſs of God, in providing another Righteouſneſs for our Juſtification; even the Righteouſneſs of his own beloved Son: We ſhall ſee Reaſon to adore and bleſs God for appointing Chriſt, who had fulfilled all Righteouſneſs to be the End of the Law, for Righteouſneſs to every one that believeth. *Rom.* x. 4.

They who go about to eſtabliſh their own Righteouſneſs, are ignorant of God's Righteouſneſs, the Righteouſneſs which he hath appointed for our Juſtification, and have not ſubmitted themſelves unto the Righteouſneſs of God: As we may conclude from what is ſaid in *ver.* 3. and we may alſo conclude that they have no Intereſt in it.

In *Rom.* iii. 20, 21. the Apoſtle after he had concluded, (*ver.* 20) *that by the Deeds of the Law*, (that is the Duties performed in Obedience to it,) *no Fleſh* (or no Man) *ſhall be juſtified in his Sight*, (that is in the Sight of God,) he ſays in ver. 21. *But now the Righteouſneſs of God*, (not his Attribute of Righteouſneſs, or Holineſs, but the Righteouſneſs, which he appointed for the Juſtification of the Ungodly, without their

Obedience to the Law, that is, the Righteousness of the Messiah,) *is manifest, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets:* and ver. 22. *Even the Righteousness of God, which is* (received) *by Faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them, that believe.* Not that the Attribute of God is unto all, and upon all them that believe, but the Righteousness of Christ, which is received by Faith, and imputed to all, and is always upon all them that believe in his Name.

We should cherish the same Dispositions in our Souls, which the Apostle expresses in Phil. iii. 8, 9. where he says, *Yea, doubtless, and I count all Things but loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the Loss of all Things, and do count them but Dung, that I may win Christ,*

And be found in him, not having mine own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.

I dare not think of appearing before the Holy and All-seeing God, with no better Righteousness than my own; I dare not enter into his Presence clothed only with my own filthy Rags.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before him, with Burnt-Offerings, with Calves of a Year old? Vain Sacrifices. *Will the Lord be pleased with Thousands of Rams, or with ten Thousands of Rivers of Oil?* No, they are worthless Oblations. *Shall I give my First-Born for my Transgression, the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul?* Impious Thoughts! As if the Merciful God, who forbid Murder, could be appeased by murdering human Bodies in Sacrifice to him.

Yet there is a sure Way, and a most comfortable Way, for the most guilty Sinner to obtain Justi-

Juſtification before God, Reconciliation to him, and Peace with him; and the Way is to obtain the Knowledge of Chriſt, and by Faith to receive, and truſt in him, and in his Righteouſneſs, which he wrought.

O merciful God, I earneſtly pray that thou wilt not deal with me according to my own Righteouſneſs polluted with numberleſs Sins, both of Omiſſion and Commiſſion! Grant that I may be found in Chriſt having on his Righteouſneſs, which he wrought for the Juſtification of Sinners, who believe in him.

No more, my God, I boaſt no more
Of all the Duties, I have done;
I quit the Hopes, I held before,
To truſt the Merits of thy Son.

Now for the Knowledge of his Name,
What was my Gain, I count my Loſs,
My former Pride, I call my Shame,
And nail my Glory to his Croſs.

Yea, and I muſt, and will eſteem
All Things but Loſs for Jesus Sake;
O may my Soul be found in him,
And of his Righteouſneſs partake!

The beſt Obedience of my Hands,
Dares not appear before thy Throne:
But Faith can anſwer thy Demands,
By pleading what my Lord has done.

Watts.

It is evident from what has been collected out of the Holy Scriptures, that all who truly believe in the Lord Jeſus, are juſtified in the Sight of God from all their Sins; all their Sins are forgiven them, the Holy God is reconciled to them,

them, and at Peace with them, as ſoon as ever they perform that Faith in Chriſt which the Goſpel requires: Likewiſe it is manifeſt that their receiving this great Bleſſing of Juſtification, is a fulfilling of Predictions on Record in the Word of God.

The Contemplation of the ineſtimable Benefits imported in this great Bleſſing, may adminiſter Comfort to ſerious Chriſtians at all Times; and not only in Times of Proſperity, but in Times of perſonal and family Trouble, and in Times of publick Calamities.

In every Time of Affliction and Diſtreſs, it is matter of Comfort to conſider, that the righteous God, is my reconciled God, and has received me into the Number of his beloved People, and is my God in Covenant.

II. Prediction. ADOPTION, is another of the Bleſſings, which the Holy Jeſus purchaſed for all that ſhall believe in his Name.

It is predicted of Believers, that they ſhall be *Children of God*; that is, it is foretold that they ſhall have the great Bleſſing and Honour of Adoption by the Almighty into the Number of his Sons and Daughters.

A. In Jer. xxxi. 9. the Lord ſays, *I am a Father to Iſrael.* And ſo he was to Abraham and to Iſaac; and ſo he was and is, and will be to all the ſpiritual Seed of Abraham; to all who are Iſraelites indeed, Children of Abraham's Faith, in all Ages, paſt, preſent, and future.

B. In Iſa. lxiii. 16. the People of God are repreſented, as ſaying, *Doubtleſs thou art our Father.——Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy Name is from Everlaſting.*

C. In John i. 12. it is ſaid, *But to as many as received him,* (that is Chriſt) *to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them, that believe on his Name.*

D. The Apoſtle Paul ſays, *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.* Rom. viii. 14, 15. And in ver. 17. he ſays, *And if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Chriſt.*

E. Rom. ix. 26. We read, *And it ſhall come to paſs that in the Place (i. e.* in the heathen Countries, where the People knew not God, nor Jeſus Chriſt,*) where it was ſaid unto them, Ye are not my People, there* (upon their Converſion to Faith in Chriſt, by the Preaching of the Goſpel) *ſhall they be called the Children of the living God.*

F. In 2 Cor. vi. 15, *&c.* the Apoſtle ſays, (to the Saints at Corinth) *What Concord hath Chriſt with Belial? Or what Part hath he that believeth with an Infidel? And what Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the living God; as God hath ſaid, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they ſhall be my People. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the* LORD, *and touch not the unclean Thing, and I will receive you.*

G. *And I will be a Father unto you, and ye ſhall be my Sons, and Daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty.*

H.

H. In Gal. iii. 26. the Apoſtle ſays, *Ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Chriſt Jeſus.*

I. In Gal. iv. 4, 5. it is ſaid, *God ſent forth his Son,* —— *To redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons.*

K. Ver. 7. *Wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son; and if a Son, then an Heir of God through Chriſt.*

L. In Eph. i. 5, 6. the Apoſtle ſays, *Having predeſtinated us to the Adoption of Children by Jeſus Chriſt to himſelf; according to the good Pleaſure of his Will, to the Praiſe of the Glory of his Grace, wherein he has made us accepted through the Beloved.*

M. In 1 John iii. 1. it is ſaid, *Behold what Manner of Love the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the Sons of God.* ver. 2. *Beloved now are we the Sons of God.*

Theſe Texts of the Holy Scriptures now recited inſtruct us in the following Particulars, *viz.*

1. That God was, is, and will be the FATHER of all that believe and obey his Word. See Letters A. B. C.

2. That all ſuch Perſons are adopted into the Number of his Children. See Letters C. D. E.

3. That Faith is the Means by which thoſe who have been wilful Sinners, the Children of the Devil; do become the Children of God. See Letters C. H.

Therefore when a Man (or as ſoon as a Man) believes in Chriſt, God gives him, and he receives the great Bleſſing of Adoption:

4. That the Adoption into the Number of the Children of God, is a Bleſſing purchaſed for us by Jeſus Chriſt. See Letter I.

5. That they who have received the Adoption are *Heirs* of God, Heirs to an Inheritance moſt glorious and everlaſting; but of this, I ſhall ſay more hereafter. See Letters D. K.

6. That Adoption is an Act of God's free Grace. See Letters L. M. Behold what Manner of Love the Father hath beſtowed on us in making us his Children! A wonderful Inſtance of free Favour utterly undeſerved by us!

7. That true Believers are predeſtinated of God to this Felicity. See Letter L.

O how great is the Happineſs of all ſincere Chriſtians? To be the Children of God is the higheſt Dignity. *This Honour have all the Saints.*

But the Unbelieving, and Diſobedient have it not: No, they are of their Father the Devil, and the Luſt of their Father they do.

But this great *Bleſſing* includes many others; which are a Ground of Comfort at all Times.

They are very many: I ſhall only ſelect ſome of them, as follows. *viz.*

1. God has foretold, that he will give them his Presence.

His gracious Preſence will make a Wilderneſs to be a Paradiſe: how often has it made Priſons, Houſes of Joy, and Gladneſs to the perſecuted Saints? The Omnipreſence of God, which excites painful Thoughts in the Minds of the Wicked, when they think upon it, gives a Pleaſure to ſerious Chriſtians.

And

And how ſhould we daily pray for God's Preſence with us? We may pray for it with a chearful Hope, if we read ſome of his Predictions.

In *Exod.* xxxiii. 14. God ſays, *My Preſence ſhall go with thee.* In *Pſal.* cxl. 13. It is ſaid to God, *the Upright ſhall dwell in thy Preſence.*

In *Iſa.* xli. 10. God ſays, *Fear thou not, for I am with Thee.* In *Deut.* xxxi. 8, It is ſaid, *The* LORD, *he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with Thee, He will not fail Thee, neither forſake Thee.*

And in *John* xiv. 23. Chriſt ſays, *If any Man love me, he will keep my Words: And my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him.*

Let ſerious Chriſtians contemplate theſe Declarations frequently; and with the Influence of the Holy Spirit, they will derive much Comfort from them.

2. It is likewiſe predicted, that God will hear the Prayers, and grant the Petitions of his Children.

It is a great Advantage for a Man to have a rich and compaſſionate Friend, able and willing to ſupply and help him on every Occaſion:

But the Favour of God affords inexpreſſibly more abundant Conſolation.

And there are gracious Predictions that he will regard the Prayers of his People.

In *Pſal.* iv. 3. It is ſaid, *But know that the* LORD *hath ſet apart him that is godly for himſelf: The Lord will hear, when I call unto him.*

In *Pſal.* xxxiv. 15. It is written, *The Eyes of the* LORD *are upon the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Cry.* ver. 17. *The Righteous cry, and the* LORD *heareth, and delivereth them out of all their Troubles.*

In *Psal.* cxlv. 19. It is said, *He will fulfill the Desire of them that fear him: He also will hear their Cry, and will save them.* Comfortable Predictions!

In *Zech.* xiii. 9. Our good God says, *They shall call on my Name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my People, And they shall say, the* LORD *is my God.*

In *Matt.* vii. 7. Our loving Redeemer says to his Disciples, *Ask, and it shall be given you: Seek and ye shall find: Knock and it shall be opened unto you.*

And in *Matt.* xxi. 22. he says, *And all Things whatsoever ye shall ask in Prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

These are comfortable *Predictions*; and many, very many more of like Import I might mention; for the Sacred Scriptures abound with them. They are Evidences of our Heavenly Father's Loving-kindness to his Children.

O what Encouragements has he given unto us to the Duty of Prayer? And to pray with humble Hope of Success to our Petitions? None of his Children ever sought his Face in vain, nor trusted, nor hoped in him in vain.

If serious Christians did record the Petitions they ask of Him, and the gracious Answers to them, which they receive from Him, what a Display of the Divine Power, Goodness, Mercy, and Faithfulness might they behold in God's Dealings with them?

The Predictions mentioned, and the Accomplishment of them, should be improved to confirm our Faith, heighten our Love, and our thankfulness to our Father, which is in Heaven; and they should more and more endear our glorious Saviour and Mediator to our Souls.

As

As we offer up our Supplications at the Throne of Grace in his Name, and as He is continually making Intercession for us, so it is for his Sake, that we are accepted with the Father, and that our Requests are granted.

In *John* xvi. 24. Christ said unto his Disciples, *Hitherto, ye have asked nothing in my Name. Ask,* (q. d. in my Name,) *and ye shall* (for my Sake,) *receive, that your Joy may be full.*

III. Sanctification, is another of the great Blessings predicted for true Believers, and is that Work, by which polluted Sinners become Holy in Heart and Life, and are renewed more and more after the Image of God.

This, is the Work of God's Holy Spirit: It begins when true Faith begins in the Soul of a Sinner.

The Blessings of Justification and Adoption, tho' different the one from the other, yet are conjoin'd, and are bestowed on the Believer, in the same Article of Time; and at the same Time the glorious Work of a Sinner's *Sanctification* does also begin.

But this is gradually carried on through the Course of a Believer's Life, from his first being born again to the Time of his Death; when Believers are made perfect in Holiness.

This, indeed, is a most blessed and important Work of the Holy Spirit. It is that Divine Operation by which we are renew'd in the Likeness and Image of God. A Blessing absolutely necessary to fit us for the happy Enjoyment of him; *Because without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* Heb. xii. 14.

But this Blessing (as is evident from the Sacred Scriptures,) belongs to them that believe in Christ.

The holy Jesus, when he pray'd for all his true Disciples to his Father, said, *Sanctify them through thy Truth: thy Word is Truth.* John xvii. 17. And ver. 19. he adds, *And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the Truth.*

The Apostle Paul said to the believing Thessalonians, *For this is the Will of God, even your Sanctification.* 1 Thes. iv. 3. And in 2 Thes. ii. 13. *God hath from the Beginning chosen you to Salvation, through Sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the Truth.*

The Apostle Peter calls the true Believers, *Elect according to the Foreknowledge of God the Father, through Sanctification of the Spirit unto Obedience.* 1 Peter i. 2.

The Apostle Paul says to Titus, Chap. ii. 11. *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation hath* (by the Gospel) *appeared to all Men, teaching us that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself* (by the Operation of the Holy Spirit,) *a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.* See also Tit. iii. 4—7.

The Way which infinite Wisdom has contriv'd, for the Recovery and Salvation of fallen Man is most remarkable: For as our first Parents fell into a State of Sin and Misery, through a proud Ambition of being wiser, and in a higher Rank than their glorious Creator thought fit; and through Unbelief of God's Word to them; for they believed the Words of the Devil, and disbelieved the Words of the Lord, who made them: So the righteous and wise God has seen

fit

fit to require Men to believe his Word; the Word of the Truth of the Gospel, and to disbelieve the Suggestions of the Devil.

And he requires all Men to believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and to follow after Holiness; and sent his beloved Son into the World that they might be saved from their Sins, sanctified and fitted to dwell with Him.

It is the Will of God that we should be holy; holy in our Hearts, in our Lives and Conversations.

But we cannot make ourselves holy: No, therefore our merciful God and Saviour, has sent down the Holy Spirit to perform the Office of a *Sanctifier* to us. And the more attentive to, and observant we are of the Word of God, that Word of Truth, and of the Motions of the Holy Spirit, the more prosperously proceeds the Work of Sanctification in us.

But they who always resist the Holy Ghost, and quench the Spirit, are not like to have the holy Fruits of the Spirit in them.

We should daily pray for the Holy Spirit always to dwell in us, and guide us in the Way wherein we should go, and always to help us to perform every Duty, and restrain us from every Thing that is sinful, and enable us to withstand and overcome every Temptation.

But notwithstanding the Holiness of sincere Christians, God sees fit by Afflictions to try their Faith and Patience; and to moderate their Affections to this World, to purge away their Dross, and to keep them circumspect in their Passage through it.

Man that is born of a Woman is of few Days, and full of Trouble. (Job xiv. 1.) And the Troubles of the Saints are some of the Means of their Sanctification.

But

But there are many Predictions on Record in the Holy Scriptures replete with Comfort for the Children of God, in regard to the Afflictions they meet with in their Course through this World.

Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous, be they high, or low in Life. Job, and David, and Lazarus, and all the rest of God's People in every Age, and every Country, have found it so, in their own Experience.

But that is a comfortable Prediction in *Rom.* viii. 28. which says, *All Things* (adverse and prosperous) *work* (i. e. shall work,) *together for Good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his Purpose.*

And so is that recorded in Isa. xliii. 1, 2. where it is written, *Thus saith the* LORD, *that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy Name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the Waters* (i. e. of Afflictions) *I will be with thee, and through the Rivers* (of Calamities) *they shall not overflow thee:* (thou shalt not perish under them) *when thou walkest through the Fire* (through fiery Trials,) *thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the Flame kindle upon thee*; but thou shalt remain safe in all sorts of Troubles.

Afflictions are intended as a Means to promote Holiness, and to keep the Children of God diligent, and faithful in their Obedience to him.

God promised his People many Blessings if they would forbear Idolatry, and keep his Sabbaths, and reverence his Sanctuary, and walk in his Statutes, and keep his Commandments: And he threatened to bring many Calamities upon them, if they would not hearken unto him, and would not do al lhis Commandments. Levit. xxvi. 7. and ver. 14.

Our

Our heavenly Father *doth not afflict willingly, nor* (willingly) *grieve the Children of Men.* Lament. iii. 33. They are chastised only when it is needful.

The Apostle Peter having mentioned to the Saints, the Inheritance reserved in Heaven for them, and the Salvation revealed in the Gospel, says, *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a Season,* (if need be) *ye are in heaviness through manifold Temptations.* 1 Pet. i. 6.

And serious Christians have reason to be patient under their Troubles, and to suppress every murmuring Thought, and remember, *That whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth, even as a Father the Son, in whom he delighteth.* Prov. iii. 11.

The Apostle says, Heb. xii. 6. *Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth:* And the Psalmist said, (Psal. xcix. 12.) *Blessed is the Man, whom thou chasteneth, O Lord, and teacheſt him out of thy Law.*

When Divine Providence brings Afflictions on us, our heavenly Father is then teaching us, and we should learn the Lessons which he teaches; we should see his Name, hear the Rod, and him who appointed it. Mich. vi. 9.

And the Children of God do find much Benefit by their heavenly Fathers chastening.

We know the Experience of the holy Psalmist, from his saying to God, *Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I have kept thy Word.* Psal. cxix. 67. and ver. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes.* ver. 75. *I know, O Lord, that thy Judgments are right, and that thou in Faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

God's People in all Ages have the like Experience: through the Temptations of the World, and the Flesh, through the Enticements of Acquaintance, and the Remainder of indwelling Sin,

Chriſtians often grow negligent of their Duties, and fall into ſinful Compliances with Cuſtoms offenſive to the Holy God; till He brings ſome Afflictions upon them, and his Spirit by Means of them, awakens their Conſciences to ſearch their Hearts, to examine and amend their Ways.

O my Father which art in Heaven! Help me by thy Grace to walk ſo circumſpectly, ſo diligently and chearfully before thee, in the Way of Obedience to all thy Commandments, that Afflictions may become leſs needful for me.

O that the Lord would guide my Way
To keep his Statutes ſtill!
O that my God would grant me Grace
To know, and do his Will.

O ſend thy Spirit down to write,
Thy Law upon my Heart;
Nor let my Tongue indulge Deceit,
Nor act the Liars part!

Make me to walk in thy Commands,
'Tis a delightful Road;
Nor let my Head, or Heart, or Hands,
Offend againſt my God.

Watts's Pſalms 11.

When Chriſtians for a while go on in the Neglect of any known Duty, or in the Commiſſion of any known Sin, they bring upon themſelves the Character of BACKSLIDERS from God, and it is a great Mercy, when his Providences follow them with one Calamity after another, till their Conſciences are awaken'd, and they are brought to conſider the Evil of their Doings, and to repent of their Sins, and to ſeek the Forgiveneſs of them through Chriſt Jeſus.

That

That is a comfortable Prediction in Isa. xxvii. 2. *By this therefore shall the Iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the Fruit* (intended) *to take away his Sin.*

God's using all proper Means to cleanse his Children from their Iniquities, and to recover them to their Duty, when they have gone astray from the Way of it, is an Evidence of his Fatherly Love and Care of them.

O the Condescension of the holy God to such Offenders! *Turn O backsliding Children saith the Lord.* Jer. iii. 14. and in Hos. xiv. 4. *I will heal their Backslidings, I will love them freely.*

How does the Father of Mercies manifest his Compassion and Love, to his transgressing Children! He draws them with the Cords of Love.

And how should the Thoughts of the divine Loving-kindness, melt the Souls of Backsliders into Shame and Sorrow for their sinful Departures from their God and Father.

How should every one of them think, and say, thus within themselves. How have I sinned against the Lord; how great are the Provocations which I have been guilty of? My Father has been continually laying Obligations on me to love and serve him, and is always doing me good, and preserving me from numberless Evils; but how base has been my Behaviour? All the Instances of his Patience and Favour, shew the heinous Nature of my Sins: Sins committed against astonishing Goodness, I have forfeited his Love: O holy God! May such a wicked Wretch as I have been call thee Father? Thou mightest not only disinherit me, but justly doom me to Death eternal, for being a rebellious Son.

Have I then any Reason to think God will receive me, if I return to him?

Hark! O my Soul! He calls to thee, he ſays, *Return unto me ye backſliding Children, and I will heal your Backſlidings.* (Jer. iii. 22.) And now, O my Soul, anſwer, *Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God.*

And may I not take encouragement to do ſo, from the Parable of the prodigal Son? He ſpent all the Subſtance his Father gave him in riotous Living; but when he had ſuffered ſore Diſtreſſes, and was reduced to great Want, he reſolved to return Home, and to humble himſelf, and to intreat his Father to receive him again into his Family, though it was but as one of his hir'd Servants.

This Prodigal when he came to himſelf, when he came to be in a right Mind, and to a due Senſe of his ſad Condition, ſaid, (Luke xv. 18. 19.) *I will ariſe, and go to my Father, and will ſay unto him, Father I have ſinned againſt Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son; make me as one of thy hir'd Servants.*

He went, and his loving and forgiving Father, (when he was yet a great Way off) *ſaw him, and had Compaſſion, and ran, and fell upon his Neck, and kiſſed him.* ver. 20.

He received his penitent Child, he was immediately reconciled to him, and rejoiced in his Converſion, and abraided him not with his paſt Sins.

And may I not hope that my heavenly Father will receive and forgive me? And be reconciled to me; for he is a merciful God, and deligheth in Mercy.

O gracious God, though thou mighteſt reject me with Abhorrence, though I am no more worthy to be called thy Son, yet for the Sake of the bleſſed Jeſus, pardon my Sins, receive me again into

thy

thy Favour, for in his Name I return unto thee! And Lord evermore keep me in the Way of Faith and Holinefs, Amen.

He will turn again, he will have Compaffion on us; he will fubdue all our Iniquities; and thou wilt caft all their Sins into the Depth of the Sea. Said the Prophet Micah unto God. Mic. vii. 10. Comfortable Words!

God will chaftife his adopted Children; he may hide his Face from them, but he will not caft them off for ever.

If his Children forfake my Laws, (fays God,) *and walk not in my Judgments; if they break my Statutes, and keep not my Commandments: Then will I vifit their Tranfgreffions with a Rod, and their Iniquity with Stripes. Nevertheleefs, my Loving-kindnefs will I not utterly take from him, nor fuffer my Faithfulnefs to fail; my Covenant will I not break, nor alter the Thing that is gone out of my Lips.* Pfal. lxxxix. 30—34.

If God's Children go aftray like a loft Sheep, (as the Pfalmift did, Pfal. cxix. 176.) he will recover, and bring them back.

Our great Redeemer calleth true Believers his Sheep. In John x. 27, 28. he fays, *My Sheep hear my Voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal Life, and they fhall never perifh, neither fhall any* (neither wicked Men nor Devils) *pluck them out of my Hands.*

A plain Proof thefe Words are, that Chrift our good Shepherd, who laid down his Life for the Sheep, will certainly bring all true Believers to the Poffeffion of eternal Life. If any of them wander from him, he will find them out, and bring them back to his Fold.

The Apoftle Paul in his Epiftle to all the Saints in Chrift Jefus, (Philip. i. 1.) in ver. 6. affures them of the Certainty of their Perfeverance; for

he ſays, *Being confident of this very Thing, that he which hath begun a good Work in you, will perform it* (or carry it on) *until the Day of Jeſus Chriſt.*

And the Apoſtle Peter eſtabliſhes the ſame Doctrine, in 1 Pet. i. 5. where ſpeaking of true Believers, he ſays, *Who are kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation:* and as this is true, ſo is it true alſo, *That at laſt they will receive the End of their Faith, even the Salvation of their Souls.*

This is a comfortable Doctrine to ſerious Chriſtians, when in the Courſe of their Pilgrimage through the Wilderneſs of this World towards the heavenly Canaan, they meet with Difficulties and Dangers; and they are afraid they ſhall not be able to hold out to the End of Life.

As David was afraid that one Day or other, he ſhould periſh by the Hand of Saul, though God had promiſed to make him King of Iſrael: So ſerious Chriſtians have ſometimes diſmal Fears on the Account of their great Frailty, and the ſtrong Oppoſitions they meet with in the Way of their Duty.

But it is matter of Comfort to conſider, that we are not left to ourſelves: No, Chriſt the Captain of our Salvation has undertaken to obtain for us a compleat Salvation; we have fled to him for Refuge, and we have committed ourſelves to Him, both Souls and Bodies, to be ſaved by him from all our Sins, and from all the Miſeries which our Sins have deſerved, and from all our Spiritual Enemies.

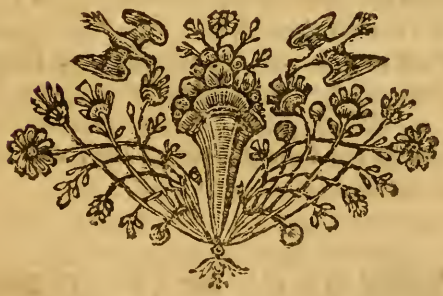
The Apoſtle ſaid to Timothy, *I know whom I have believed,* (or truſted,) *and I am perſuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him againſt that Day.* 2 Tim. i. 13. And every ſincere Chriſtian may ſay the ſame.

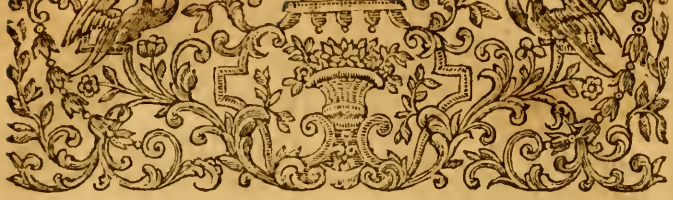
And

And (in Rom. viii. 35——37.) he ſays, *Who ſhall ſeparate us from the Love of Chriſt? Shall Tribulation, or Diſtreſs, or Perſecution, or Famine, or Nakedneſs, or Peril, or Sword? Nay, in all theſe Things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us.*

Although without Chriſt we can do nothing, yet through his ſtrengthening us, we ſhall be able to hold on our Way, and obtain a compleat Victory over all the Principalities and Powers of Darkneſs.

The Contemplation of theſe Things may conſolate our Minds, and relieve us from uneaſy, unbelieving Fears.





LETTER VI.

On the Afflictions of serious Christians, and the Predictions, which may comfort them in the Times of their Troubles. When they have been under many Afflictions and are brought into great Perplexity, there are Predictions, which may support them: AFFLICTIONS *are of two Kinds,* Temporal, *and* Spiritual: I. *Of temporal Afflictions particularly.* 1. *By the Death of Children.* 2. *The Death of Husbands.* 3. *The Loss of dear and useful Friends.* 4. *The Falling under false Accusations, with the Predictions which may afford Relief under such Sorrows.* II. *Of Spiritual Troubles particularly.* 1. *Of an habitual Despondence.* 2. *Of the Anguish and Distress of the Soul, after the Commission of some heinous Sin.* 3. *Of the great Troubles and Sorrow occasioned by the violent Temptations, and Assaults of the Devil.*

THERE are Times of great Afflictions and Distress even with serious Christians; and there are Predictions in the Holy Scriptures, which may relieve, and comfort their sorrowful Hearts: Blessed be our Compassionate God for them!

Sometimes

Sometimes Afflictions come quick, one after another, and are of long Continuance, and the Troubles are great, and the Aſpect of Providence ſeems to threaten greater.

They are under thick Darkneſs, reduced to great Extremity, and they can ſee no Way in which Deliverance can come to them; and they are ready almoſt to give up their Hope.

Yet in ſuch a diſmal Time as this, there are Predictions proper for their Support and Comfort.

For in Iſa. xli. 17. we read theſe Words, *I the* LORD *will hear them, I the God of Iſrael will not forſake them:* that is, thoſe who are his People, he will not forſake: Comfortable Predictions ~~this~~ these! And in many Places God has promiſed to deliver his People.

And may not ſerious Chriſtians think that with God, their own God, all Things are poſſible; and may they not think he has Bowels of Pity, as well as boundleſs Power?

May they not pray? May they not ſay to their Father which is in Heaven? O my Father! Thou art the mighty God, which doth great Things paſt finding out, yea, and Wonders without Number.

Have they not Leave to pour out their Complaints before Him? may they not ſay?

Conſider all my ſorrows, Lord,
And thy Deliverance ſend;
My Soul for thy Salvation faints,
When will my Troubles end?

Yet have I found, 'tis good for me
To bear my Fathers Rod,
Afflictions make me learn thy Law,
And live upon my God.

I know thy Judgments, Lord, are right,
Tho' they may ſeem ſevere;

The ſharpeſt Sufferings I endure,
Flow from thy faithful Care.
WATTS's Pſalms 119.

O my merciful God, purge away the Droſs of my Sin from my Soul, by thy Chaſtiſements; and forgive, and ſave thy Servant that truſteth in Thee!

True; to an Eye of Senſe, my Deliverance appears as a Thing impoſſible; and thus appeared the Deliverance of the Children of Iſrael, when they had the Sea juſt before them, and their Enemies juſt behind them: And thus did appear the Deliverance of Abraham from his agonizing Trial, when his Arm was lifted up to ſlay his Son, and the only Son of the Promiſe, as a Sacrifice to God; and yet thou didſt deliver the Children of Iſrael, and didſt deliver Abraham in the laſt Extremity, and thou canſt deliver me. May I not ſay?

Oft in the laſt diſtreſſing Hour
The Lord diſplays delivering Power,
The Mount of Sorrows is the Place,
Where we ſhall ſee ſurprizing Grace.
WATTS.

Why then art thou caſt down, O my Soul? And why art thou diſquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I ſhall yet Praiſe him, who is the Health of my Countenance and my God. Pſal. xlii. 11.

Our good God in his Predictions has provided for the Comfort of his People, under the various Afflictions wherewith they may be exerciſed.

The Afflictions incident to Chriſtians, are either of a Temporal, or of a Spiritual Nature; I ſhall briefly take notice of both Sorts.

I. Of

I. Of the Afflictions of a temporal Kind, these are many, but I shall take notice of some that are very frequent; particularly the following.

1. If their Children die, they may consider that there is a Name better than of Sons and of Daughters, which God hath foretold that he will give to them that keep his Sabbaths, and choose the Things that please him, and take hold of his Covenant. *That he will give them an everlasting Name, that shall not be cut off.* Isa. lv. 4, 5.

Serious Christians under the Loss of their little Ones, may take Comfort as David did, by considering that although their Children cannot return to be with them again in this World; yet, that they shall in a little Time, go to be with them in the other World; and they should imitate David's Example, and instead of secreting themselves, and indulging an unreasonable Grief, they should give their Bodies all needful Refreshment, and go to the House of God and worship him in the Seasons of it; whose Providence wisely and rightly manageth all Things.

2. When Husbands die, our compassionate God has provided for the Comfort of the Widows, and of their fatherless Children.

In Jer. xlix. 11. God says, *Leave thy Fatherless Children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy Widows trust in me.* These Words plainly imply a Prediction, that God will take care of, and provide for the Fatherless and the Widows.

In Psal. lxviii. 5. it is said, *A Father of the Fatherless, and a Judge of the Widows is God in his Holy Habitation.* These Words signify a Prediction that God will defend and provide for the Widows, and their fatherless Children.

And the Consideration of these Predictions may well comfort the Minds, and rejoice the Hearts

of ſerious Chriſtians in ſuch an afflicted Condition; and more eſpecially as the divine Providence is always fulfilling the Predictions recorded in the Sacred Scriptures.

In Exod. xxii. 22. God ſays, *Ye ſhall not afflict any Widow, or fatherleſs Child.* And to enforce this Law, he adds, *If thou afflict them in any wiſe, and they cry at all unto me; I will ſurely hear their Cry, and my Wrath ſhall wax hot, and I will kill you with the Sword, and your Wives ſhall be Widows, and your Children fatherleſs*, ver. 23, 24.

Theſe awful Threatnings ſhould not only make all Men afraid of injuring the Fatherleſs and Widows; but excite all Men to ſhew them Kindneſs as there may be Occaſion; becauſe their doing ſo will be pleaſing to God, as may well be concluded from the aforementioned Law, enforced with ſuch terrible Threatnings againſt the Tranſgreſſors of it.

3. Serious Chriſtians may likewiſe be in great Affliction by the Death of dear and uſeful Friends, who were a principal Support and Comfort to them: Or if not by their Death, yet by their ceaſing to be Friends, and ſometimes by their becoming Enemies.

A Chriſtian thus afflicted, may take Comfort in conſidering, that although earthly Friends die, yet their Father which is in Heaven lives for ever; and can, and often doth raiſe up new Friends in their ſtead, and more uſeful than thoſe they have loſt: Or if God ſuffers our Friends to forſake us, he teaches us never to truſt in Man, *Nor in an Arm of Fleſh.*

This Affliction befel David, as appears from what he ſays, in Pſal. lv. ver. 12, 13, 14. *For it was not an Enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himſelf againſt me, then I would have*

have hid myself from him; but it was thou, a Man mine equal, my Guide and my Acquaintance: We took sweet Counsel together, and walked unto the House of God in company.

David very plainly suffered much Grief, by the Behaviour and Reproaches of his Friends; but under such a Trouble, there are Predictions, which may administer Comfort to our Minds. For it is said, *The Lord thy God is a merciful God, he will not forsake thee.* (No, although worldly Friends may do so,) *but with everlasting Kindness will I have Mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer.* Isa. liv. 8.

4. Serious Christians may also be in great Affliction by false Accusations.

It was the Case of David. *False Witnesses did rise up; they laid to my Charge, Things that I knew not,* was his Complaint. Psal. xxxv. 11.

But against Trouble by such vile Treatment, that Prediction in Psal. xxxvii. 5, 6. viz. *Commit thy Way* (and thy Cause) *unto the* LORD; *trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass: And he shall bring forth thy Righteousness as the Light, and thy Judgment as the noon Day.*

His Providence will make thy Innocence appear clearly; therefore rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.

Some of the Troubles, which our glorious Redeemer went through for our Sakes, were false Accusations, bitter Reproaches, and perverse Misinterpretations of his kindest Actions. He long endured the Contradiction of Sinners against himself, even through the whole Course of his Life. And exercised perfect Meekness and Patience, under all Indignities and malicious Treatment; and from his Example we should learn to exercise Patience and Meekness, and endeavour

deavour to behave as he did, under the cruel Behaviour of those who should have received him as their best Friend and Saviour, and who should have rejoiced in him, and fervently loved him.

II. Afflictions of a spiritual Nature are various: I shall only mention the Three following, *viz.*

1. An habitual Despondency or Despair, from the Disease of the Body called *Melancholy.* This needs Medicines till the Disorder of the Body is removed.

2. Anguish, and Distress of the Soul, after the Commission of some heinous Sin.

This was the Case of David after his Sin in the Matter of Uriah. (2 Sam. chap. xi. 12.) His Guilt was great, and great was the Grief, and Remorse of his Soul on that Account. The Fifty first Psalm, was written as a publick penitent Confession to the World of his complicated Crime, and to express his deep Contrition, and doubtless, to preserve in his Conscience a Self-loathing Remembrance of it.

The Psalm is a very mournful Supplication to God, on the Account of those Transgressions; and several of the Petitions shew that his Sorrow was long and grievous; so great that they could not be fully expressed.

But we may form some Idea of his Sorrows from his Petitions, *viz.*

Have Mercy upon me, O God, according to thy Loving-kindness; according to the Multitude of thy tender Mercies, blot out my Transgressions: Wash me throughly from mine Iniquity, and cleanse me from my Sin: For I acknowledge my Transgressions, and my Sin is ever before me: Make me to hear Joy and Gladness; that the Bones, which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy Face from my Sins; and blot out

all

all mine Iniquities: Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me: Cast me not away from thy Presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me: Restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. A broken and a contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Great was the Anguish, and Distress of his Soul! And so it was after he had committed the Sin of numbring the People. 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. After the Thing was done, *Davids Heart smote him; and David said unto the* LORD, *I have sinned in that I have done: And now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the Iniquity of thy Servant, for I have done very foolishly.*

And how much greater must be the Horror of his Mind, when the Lord expressed his Anger against him? And put three dreadful Things to his Choice, *viz.* seven Years Famine, or to flee three Months before his Enemies, while they pursued him; or to have three Days Pestilence in his Land: As he chose the Pestilence, ver. 15. *So the* LORD *sent the Pestilence upon Israel in the Morning, even to the Time appointed*, that is for three Days.

Who can imagine the Anguish and Distress of his Soul during those three long Days? But somewhat of it is discovered by those Heart-piercing Words, which he spoke to the merciful God on the third Day, ver. 17. *David spake unto the* LORD, *when he saw the Angel that smote the People, and said, lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these Sheep, what have they done? Let thine Hand, I pray thee, be against me, and my Father's House.*

The Words discover not only great Humanity, and a tender Regard to the Welfare of his Subjects,

jects, but alſo that he was long under agonizing Sorrow.

O it is a dreadful Thing to provoke the Anger of the holy and righteous God!

But as God is juſt, ſo he is merciful! And how ſoon was his Compaſſion manifeſted to David? For the Prophet Gad, that ſame Day, came to David, and directed him to rear up an Altar unto the *Lord* in the Threſhing-floor of Araunah.

He did ſo, and offered burnt Offerings, and peace Offerings to the LORD, *And the Lord was intreated for the Land, and the Plague was ſtayed from Iſrael.* ver. 25.

The Apoſtle Peter had like Diſtreſs, and Anguiſh of Soul, after he had denied his Maſter and his Saviour: When he had done it, he remembred the Words of Jeſus, who foretold him of it, *And went out, and wept bitterly.* Matt. xxvi. 75.

We have need to watch and pray, leſt we fall into Temptation, and are overcome by it.

3. Another Sort of ſpiritual Troubles, ariſe from the violent Temptations and Aſſaults of the Devil.

The Devil will give no Diſturbance to his own Servants and Children, who voluntarily do his Will, and run on in the broad Way of Sin, which leads down to everlaſting Deſtruction. It gives him a Pleaſure to ſee the Generality of People continuing their Rebellion againſt the holy God, and going on boldly in a Courſe of wilful Diſobedience to his Authority, and his Law.

It pleaſes him to ſee the Places where the Goſpel is preached, thin of People, and the Aſſemblies for ſenſual Delights crouded: To ſee ſuch Multitudes eagerly purſuing the Pleaſures of Senſe at great Expence, and at the Hazard of their

Health: Or elſe labouring with all their Might, early and late, for the Meat that periſhes, and for the Riches of this World, which may make themſelves Wings and fly away: Or indefatigable in uſing all Ways and Means to obtain Honours among Men, to the intire Neglect of the Welfare, the Safety, the Salvation and Happineſs of their immortal Souls. Theſe People do as the Devil would have them do; they pleaſe their infernal Maſter, and will be with him in the next World, in Torments, which will never end, except they hearken to the merciful Calls of the Goſpel.

O merciful God! Look down with Pity on theſe miſerable People! They are dead, dead in their Treſpaſſes and Sins, and are as inſenſible of their Guilt, and Wretchedneſs, and Danger as a dead Body is inſenſible of Pain. Lord by thy Holy Spirit do thou quicken them! Make Multitudes of them Converts from Sin and Satan. Have not many of thy Saints been ſuch as theſe? For the Apoſtle, after he had declared to the Saints at Corinth, that *Neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abuſers of themſelves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God.* He ſaid unto them, *And ſuch were ſome of you; but ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified in the Name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our God.* 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

O my Father which art in Heaven! Will it not be a glorious Diſplay of the Riches of thy Grace, if thou ſhalt ſend down thy Holy Spirit, and awaken the Conſciences of Multitudes of theſe unhappy Creatures, and bring them to repent of their Sins, and by Faith unfeigned with Joy to accept of thy beloved Son to ſave them?

O my good God, once I was as regardleſs of the State of my Soul, and of an Intereſt in Chriſt, as any of theſe, and was dead in Sin as theſe are; but thou hadſt Mercy on me, and broughteſt me to be ſenſible of my Want of a Saviour, and didſt convince me that Chriſt only could redeem me; thy Holy Spirit did ſet the loving Jeſus before me, as both able, and willing to ſave me: Bleſſed for ever be thy holy Name for that Grace which brought me to be one of Chriſt's Diſciples! O gracious God, extend that Mercy to theſe miſerable People, which thou didſt ſhew to me! Will they not rejoice in thy Loving-kindneſs, and labour to promote that Goſpel which many of them have been endeavouring to deſtroy? Lord glorify thy great Name, by ſubduing them to thyſelf!

But although the Devil ſuffers wilful Sinners to go on in their evil-Ways, without diſturbing their Minds; YET when he finds the holy God working in the Souls of any of them, he beſtirs himſelf to hinder it as much as poſſible, and purſues them with his fiery Darts, and many Times they have dreadful Conflicts with this grand Enemy of their Salvation.

But Chriſt, who is in them by his Spirit, is ſtronger than all the Principalities and Powers of Darkneſs.

When Satan makes his Aſſaults on Chriſtians, in the Beginning of their new Life, does ſometimes repeat them with great Violence: He is always watching Opportunities of preſenting his Temptations, to make them neglect Duty, or to do Things, which God has forbidden them.

And therefore a Chriſtian's Life is compared to a WARFARE; and the Diſciples of Chriſt are informed of this in the holy Scriptures, and inſtructed

ſtructed how to manage it; particularly, in Eph. vi. 10—17. Where the Apoſtle ſays to them, *My Brethren be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might. Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the Wiles of the Devil. For we wreſtle not* (only) *againſt* (the Luſts of) *Fleſh and Blood, but againſt Principalities, againſt Powers, againſt the Rulers of the Darkneſs of this World, againſt ſpiritual Wickedneſs in high Places: Wherefore take unto you the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to withſtand in the evil Day, and having done all to ſtand: Stand therefore, having your Loins girt about with Truth, and having on the Breaſt-plate of Righteouſneſs: And your Feet ſhod with the Preparation of the Goſpel of Peace: Above all, taking the Shield of Faith, wherewith ye ſhall be able to quench the fiery Darts of the Wicked.* (one) *And take the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*

The Enemies, which ſerious Chriſtians muſt encounter with, are very ſubtle, very potent and very malicious. There is no avoiding them, when God permits them to aſſault us: We muſt reſiſt, we muſt fight, and we muſt conquer them, or be overcome and periſh by them. No wonder then, that diſtreſſing Fears do ſometimes ariſe in the Minds of pious Perſons.

But there are Predictions in the holy Scriptures, which may animate our Hope, excite our Courage, and adminiſter Conſolation to our Souls, when under ſtrong Temptations.

In the 1 Cor. x. 11. it is ſaid, *God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the Temptation alſo make a Way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it.* A moſt comfortable Prediction this! And may help

us against our Fears, and revive our Hope, when the Devil continues urging his Temptations strongly upon us, and we are afraid of being overcome by them.

In Rom. viii. 37. After the Apostle had mentioned some of the Trials of true Believers, as in Tribulation, Distress, Persecution, Famine, Nakedness, Perils and Sword, he says, *In all these Things we are* (and shall be) *more than Conquerors, through him that loved us.* The Words imply a Prediction, that God will not suffer sincere Christians to be overcome by the Enemies of their Souls, but that through Christ, who loved them, they shall be made victorious over all their Adversaries: And it teaches us to look to Christ the Captain of our Salvation, and to depend on him for Success in our Warfare.

St. Peter says, 2 Pet. ii. 9. *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of Temptations.* Which Words plainly imply a Prediction that the Lord *will* deliver the Godly out of Temptations; because otherwise the Declaration is no ground of Comfort to the Saints.

In Rom. xvi. 20. The Apostle says to the Saints at Rome, and to the Saints in all Places, and Ages; *And the God of Peace shall bruise* (or tread) *Satan under your Feet shortly.* Here is a Prediction signifying, that although the Saints for a while are tempted and assaulted by the Devil, yet that God in due Time, will subdue the Devil under them, and make them victorious over him.

These Promises may well encourage us to continue a vigorous Opposition to all his Attacks, remembring that it is said, *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.* James iv. 7.

The Christian in the Day of Temptation, should do as the Apostle did, when, *There was given*

given to him a Thorn in the Flesh, the Messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above Measure. 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9. He sought by Prayer to his Lord and Master, the glorious Captain of his Salvation, for Help and Deliverance. *For this Thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.* ver. 8. And he did not pray in vain; for the Lord returned this gracious Answer to his Petition, saying, *My Grace is sufficient for thee; for my Strength is made perfect in weakness.*

The Grace of the Lord Jesus was sufficient to support the Apostle all the Time of his Trial, and to release him from it, when it should be fit to do it; and the Strength of Christ is manifest in sustaining his weak Disciples, and in making them Conquerors over their most powerful Enemies: And what was the Apostle's Resolution upon receiving so gracious an Answer to his Prayers? He tells us, saying, *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my Infirmities, that the Power of Christ may rest upon me.*

The Consideration that the Power of Christ resteth upon Believers, may well reconcile them to endure Hardships in their spiritual Warfare, as becometh good Soldiers of the blessed Jesus, and may keep them from being discouraged, by the Thoughts of their own Weakness and Infirmities.

The serious Christian in the Hour of Temptation, should go to the Throne of Grace, and present his Petitions for Support, for Help, and Deliverance.

We should look to our great Redeemer, and may say to him, Lord didst thou not come into the World to destroy the Works of the Devil? And didst thou not thyself suffer being tempted? O pity me now, being sorely distressed by the Assaults

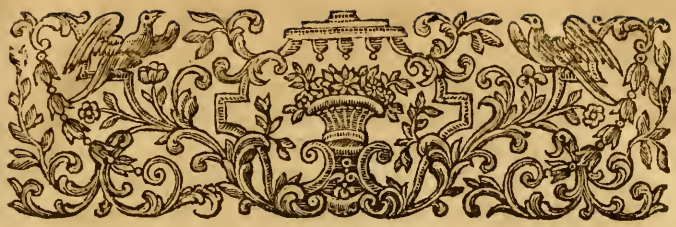
Aſſaults and Buffetings of Satan! For thou art a compaſſionate Saviour, and art able to ſuccour them that are tempted: O merciful Jeſus help me, and rebuke the Devil, and command him to ceaſe his Suggeſtions: Thy Grace is ſufficient for me, and thy Strength is made perfect in Weakneſs; and thou knoweſt my Weakneſs, O communicate Strength to me, and make the Enemy of my Soul to fly from me.

My God, the Prince of Darkneſs tries
All his malicious Arts;
He ſpreads a Miſt before my Eyes,
And throws his fiery Darts.

Be thou my Sun, and thou my Shield,
My Soul in Safety keep;
My Foes will fly at thy Command,
And Satan hide his Head.

Thou wilt diſplay that ſovereign Grace,
Where all my Hopes have hung;
I ſhall employ my Lips in praiſe,
And Victory ſhall be ſung.

WATTS's Pſal. p. 34.



LETTER VII.

On the Predictions relative to ſincere Chriſtians, from the Time of their Death. Particularly:

1. *It is predicted that at Death, their Souls ſhall be made perfect in Holineſs. What is communion with God, explained.*
2. *That their Bodies ſhall remain under the Care of Chriſt after Death.*
3. *That their Bodies will be raiſed to life again; and alſo the Bodies of the Wicked.*
4. *That the Soul of every Believer at Death, will be put into another Building for its Habitation.*
5. *That the Souls of Believers immediately after Death, will be with Chriſt.*
6. *That the Time of the general Reſurrection will be very ſolemn, magnificent, and awful. Of the* CHANGE, *that will be made in the Bodies of thoſe, who ſhall be living at the Time of the general Reſurrection. And that it will make their Bodies* incorruptible *and* immortal.

Laſtly. *It is predicted that the Saints ſhall have an* Inheritance, *but not be put into the Poſſeſſion of it, till the Day of Judgment.——A Kingdom ſeems to be the Inheritance promiſed to them; and as ſuitable to ſuch an Inheritance, it is foretold, that they ſhall have a* Crown *of Righteouſneſs, and a*

Crown

Crown *of Life*; *and it is predicted, that they* in *shall* reign, *reign* in *Life by Jesus Christ.*

PROCEED now to consider the sacred Predictions, relative to sincere Christians from the Time of their Death: And the wonderful Love of God towards them, appears gloriously in those which shall be mentioned, as well as in those which have been considered.

Great are the Felicities purchased by the blessed Jesus, and intended for his Disciples: We can have no adequate Notions of them, while we remain in this Vale of Tears, in a State mixed with Sin and Sorrow.

As it is written, *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* 1 Cor. ii. 9. They are so many, so great, so glorious that we cannot comprehend them.

The Apostle adds, *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.* ver. 10. God, has though not fully, yet in a comfortable Measure made them known in his Word, by his Spirit.

And what he has revealed, we should endeavour to understand, especially as to the following Particulars.

I. That at Death, the Souls of Believers are made perfect in Holiness.

The Apostle calls the Souls of true Believers after Death, *The Spirits of just Men made perfect.* Heb. xii. 23.

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We may from these Words observe, that although in this World, there is some Remainder of sinful Corruptions in the best of Christians, some Imperfection or other, yet at Death every Imperfection is done away, and the Souls of the Righteous are then made perfectly Holy.

How the Holy Spirit compleats the Sanctification of true Believers, we know not, and it is not needful for us to know the Manner of his Operation: But it is sufficient for us to know that at Death, the glorious Work will be perfected; and the Revelation of this Truth, hath the Signification of Prediction, that it shall be so with the Souls of all sincere Christians at Death in every Age: And the Thoughts of it, may well rejoice our Hearts. Here our Minds are frequently disturbed by sinful Thoughts and Inclinations rising in us, and when we would do good, evil is often present with us; and the Good, that we would do, we do not, and the Evil that we would not do, we do. It is Matter of Grief that our Obedience is mixed with Multitudes of Sins, both of Omission and Commission; and that our best Services, even our Performances of religious Worship, are polluted with a Mixture of Sin: It is Matter of Grief that we meet with many Temptations from the Persons we converse with, and from the alluring Things of the World, and from the Suggestions of the Devil; and therefore it is a ground of Comfort, that we shall Sin no more after Death, nor meet with Temptations of any kind: Then there will be no Hindrance to our Communion with our God and Saviour, and no Interruption in it.

Serious Christians daily have Communion with God here: But what is Communion with God? And when may I think that I enjoy it?

Theſe are weighty Queſtions, and it helps me to form right Anſwers to them, when I conſider that I may be ſaid to have Communion with, and the Enjoyment of a beloved Friend, when we are preſent together, and I am ſpeaking to him, and he to me alternately; when there is a mutual Converſe between my Friend and me.

And thus it is in the Time of religious Worſhip in Publick, in the Family and in ſecret: In the publick Worſhip, when the Word of God is read, or any Part of it is diſcourſed on by a Miniſter of Chriſt, then God is ſpeaking to us: And when the Miniſter as the Mouth of the chriſtian Aſſembly preſent, offers up Prayers, and Supplications, and Praiſes to God, with Confeſſion of Sin, and thankful Acknowledgment of divine Mercies, then we are ſpeaking to God, and thus there is a mutual Converſe, or Communion between God and his People.

Not that every Perſon preſent in the Aſſembly has the bleſſed Enjoyment of God: No; they whoſe Thoughts are wandring after a thouſand Vanities in the Time of divine Service, who neither regard what the Lord ſpeaketh by the Word read, or preached, nor what is ſpoken to the Lord, in the ſolemn Addreſſes at the Throne of Grace: These have no Communion with God.

But thoſe ſerious Chriſtians, who are very attentive to the Word of God which they hear, and whoſe Souls ſay Amen to the ſeveral Things ſpoken to God in the Name of Chriſt, may be ſaid to have Communion with God, in the Ordinances of his publick Worſhip.

And this may help us to underſtand, when a Chriſtian has Communion with God, in the Seaſons of Family, and of ſecret Worſhip.

I may add that a ſerious Chriſtian has Communion with God, and Fellowſhip with Chriſt, not

only in the ſtated Times of religious Worſhip, but occaſionally, and often between thoſe happy Seaſons.

When we are abroad, or at home, when we are alone, or in company, if God by his Holy Spirit brings ſome good Word of his to our Remembrance, for our Guidance, Edification and Comfort; or ſpeaks to us by his Providence, producing merciful Events for our Advantage, thereby calling us to immediate thankful Acknowledgments and Praiſe; or ſpeaks to us by afflictive Events, which fill us with Grief, and bring us ſometimes into great Perplexity, which excite us to cry to the Lord in Diſtreſs, that he would ſupport and deliver us: If at ſuch Time, our Souls are attentive to the Voice of God ſpeaking to us, and ſuitable Ejaculations of Thanks and Praiſe, or of humble Supplications aſcend from us to our Father which is in Heaven, ſuitably to what the Lord ſpeaketh by his Word, or by his Providence, there is then a Communion between God and us.

And ſuch Communion ſhall Chriſtians frequently have, who walk cloſely with God. They are ſhort indeed, but very comfortable, and conduce much to preſerve us in a holy Frame.

II. It is revealed in the holy Scriptures, that the Bodies of true Believers, are under the Care of Chriſt after Death, to the Reſurrection of the Dead.

In John vi. 39. Chriſt ſays, *This is the Father's Will, which hath ſent me, that of all which he hath given me, I ſhould loſe nothing, but ſhould raiſe it up again at the laſt Day.* That is, raiſe up the Body. Theſe Words plainly ſhew, that the Father hath committed the Bodies of thoſe that are given to Chriſt, to the Care of Chriſt, and by him to be raiſed up from the Dead at the laſt Day.

And thus they are a Prediction that Chrift will do fo. In ver. 44. Chrift fays, *And I will raife him up at the laft Day.* i. e. The Body of every one that cometh to him by true Faith.

It muft be obferved, that the *fame* Bodies of the Saints, which die are to be raifed again: Chrift does not fay, I will create new Bodies at the End of the World, in which the Souls of my Difciples fhall dwell, but that identical Body, which the Soul of a Believer is taken from, at Death fhall be raifed again.

It feems hence a juft Conclufion, that there are certain Parts of Matter in every human Body, which as fixed *Stamina* abide always the fame, and a certain Modification, or Conftruction of them, peculiar to each individual Body, by which it is diftinguifhed from all others, and become an individual Body.

By Death the original *Stamina* are feparated, the Union of them diffolved, and their Conftructure pulled to pieces.

As if a prudent Man for fome good Reafons fhould take his Houfe to pieces, and carefully preferve the Materials, and after fome Time fhould put them together, and in the fame Form in which they were before the Houfe was pulled down. It may very fitly be called the fame Houfe.

In fomewhat fimilar Manner, the Materials of the Bodies of each dead Saint, are preferved by the Care of the mighty Jefus, and at the Refurrection, the feparated Parts of each individual Body, are collected and united to the forming each identical Body, which it was before Death.

How the feperate Parts are brought fo together, I know not, but it is eafy to an omnipotent Being, with whom all Things are poffible.

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In 1 Thes. iv. 14. It is said, *Even so, them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.* This is spoken of the Bodies of true Believers; for their Souls never sleep, but are happily with Christ, and active in their Enjoyment of Him, where he is: It is the Body therefore that sleeps, and the Time which passes between the Death of the Body, and its being raised to Life again in the Morning of the Resurrection, will seem as nothing: As does the Time that passes between a Man's falling asleep at Night, and remains sleeping, till the Morning.

The Bodies of the Saints being spoken of as sleeping in Jesus, lets us know that their Bodies are under his special Care; which likewise is implied in the Prediction, *That he will raise them up, at the last Day.*

And the Consideration of this Truth, may be a Means of Comfort to serious Christians, and contribute to abate the Fears of Death.

III. It is predicted that the Bodies of true Believers shall be raised to Life again, and likewise the Bodies of the Wicked: This is evident from those Words of the Lord Jesus already mentioned.

In Rom. viii. 11. It is said, *If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the Dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the Dead, shall also quicken your mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

In many Places of the holy Scripture, the Resurrection of Mens Bodies again to Life is manifestly predicted. The Bodies both of the Righteous, and of the Wicked, will be made to live again.

The Hour is coming in the which, all (both good and bad) *that are in the Graves, shall hear his Voice,*

Voice, (that is, the Voice of the Son of God,) *and ſhall come forth, they that have done Good, unto the Reſurrection of Life; and they that have Evil, unto the Reſurrection of Damnation*; ſaid our great Redeemer. In John v. 28, 29.

Some of the Dead will be awakened from the Sleep of Death, or raiſed up to everlaſting Life, and ſome to Shame and everlaſting Contempt.

There will be a vaſt Difference between the State of the Bodies of ſincere Chriſtians, and that of the Unbelieving, and Diſobedient after the Reſurrection, in the laſt Day.

The Saints in their firſt believing on the Lord Jeſus, *Yielded themſelves unto God, as thoſe that were alive from the Dead, and their Members as Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs unto God.* According to the Commandment, in Rom. vi. 13.

And as the dead Bodies of Believers during the Time of their Life here, were faithful Servants to their Souls, always acting according to the Determination of their Wills, carrying them to the Places of divine Worſhip; and were Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs, and happy Inſtruments in the Performance of all Duties required by the Goſpel; ſo at the Reſurrection, when theſe ſame Bodies ſhall be raiſed up, and their immortal Spirits, their former Inhabitants are again put into them; then will they become Partakers of the good Things, which God has prepared for, and will beſtow on thoſe who love, and ſerve him.

In like manner, when the Bodies of the Wicked ſhall be raiſed up out of their Graves, and their guilty, their accurſed, and condemned Spirits ſhall again enter into, and be united with them; then the wretched Bodies which inſtead of ſerving their Souls, in being Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs, did by their ſinful Luſtings enſlave their Souls, and carried them into Harlots Houſes, or

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to ſeek other ſinful Pleaſures, or hurry them to practiſe Things, or to perform Actions which the holy God has forbidden; then will thoſe filthy Bodies reunited with their former wicked Inhabitants become Partakers with them of the ſame everlaſting Torments.

The Unbelievers willingly ſuffered Sin to reign in their mortal Bodies, and obeyed it in the Luſts thereof. They yielded their Members as Inſtruments of Unrighteouſneſs unto Sin. Both their Souls and Bodies were the willing Servants of Sin, while they lived together in this World, and therefore after the Reſurrection, they will together ſuffer endleſs Tortures and Miſeries.

But the Bodies of the Saints will have a glorious Reſurrection. The Apoſtle Paul foretells that the Saviour; *The Lord Jeſus Chriſt will change our vile Body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the Working whereby he is able even to ſubdue all Things unto himſelf.* Phil. iii. 20, 21.

And in 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43. The Apoſtle ſpeaking of the Body at Death, and of the Reſurrection of the Dead, ſays, *It* (that is, the Body at Death,) *is ſown in Corruption, it is* (to be) *raiſed in Incorruption: It is ſown in Diſhonour, it is* (to be) *raiſed in Glory: It is ſown in Weakneſs, it is* (to be) *raiſed in Power.* Theſe are comfortable Predictions!

Holy Job comforted himſelf, with the Conſideration of the Certainty of the Reſurrection of the Dead: The Truth of which God revealed to him: It was a Cordial to his Soul bowed down under complicated Afflictions, and full of Grief and Anguiſh. Job xix. 23. He ſays, *Oh that my Words were now written, Oh that they were printed in a Book! That they were graven with an Iron Pen and Lead, in the Rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand at the*

the latter Day upon the Earth: And though after my Skin, Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God, (my Redeemer,) *whom I shall see for myself, and mine Eyes shall behold, and not another; though my Reins be consumed within me.*

What this just Man said, by the Inspiration of the Almighty, ought to be esteemed a Prediction of the Resurrection of the Bodies of the Saints, and signifying that those same Bodies, which were dead and buried, should be raised to Life again.

It was revealed to him, that there was a Redeemer, and that this Redeemer will appear at the last Day.

And they signify a Prediction, that every Saint at the Resurrection, should with their own Eyes behold the blessed Saviour, and with their Souls and Bodies he admitted to the Enjoyment of God.

And we may take Comfort in the Consideration of these Truths.

IV. It seems predicted that God will put the Soul of every true Believer at Death, into *another Building* for its Habitation, instead of its natural Body.

The Apostle Paul says, *We know that if the earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved,* (that is, dead,) *we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* 2 Cor. v. 1.

1. Here it may be observed, that the Body of a Man is called a House, and it may be so called, because it is the Habitation of the Soul, in which it dwelleth here till Death.

2. It is called *our earthly House*, and it may be so called, because the Materials of it are earthy: Man, as to his Body being made of the Earth.

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3. The Body of a Man is alſo called a *Tabernacle*; and very fitly, becauſe as a Tabernacle, whoſe Materials are ſlight, is ſoon taken down; ſo the Body of a Man is eaſily deſtroyed, and taken down.

4. That the Apoſtle ſpeaketh of *two* Habitations appointed for the Souls of Believers to reſide in, *viz.* the natural Body called the *earthly Houſe*, and another Building different from it; and to diſtinguiſh it from the natural Body, the Apoſtle calls it a *Building of God*; and he calls it an Houſe, as the Soul of a Believer is to have his Reſidence in it after Death; and it is called an Houſe not made with Hands, *q. d.* not made with the Hands of Men.

5. We may obſerve, that the heavenly Building intended for the Habitation of the Soul, is called an Houſe eternal in the Heavens: Our Bodies, theſe earthly Houſes, have their Situation only on this Earth, till the Great and laſt Day, [the Day of the general Reſurrection;] but our other Houſes, called the Building of God, have their Situation not on Earth, but in the Heavens.

We know that if the earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle were diſſolved, (in Death,) *we have a Building of God.* The Words plainly imply, that God has made and provided another Houſe, into which the Soul will be removed as ſoon as the earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle is diſſolved, and in which it will dwell not on Earth, but in the Heavens.

There is no Reaſon to think that this Building of God, (this Houſe not made with Hands,) was intended for the Soul after the Reſurrection, and not before; for at the Reſurrection, the Soul is to be received again into its own natural and identical Body.

In Verſe 2. the Apoſtle ſays. *For in this Tabernacle,* (of our natural Body,) *we groan earneſtly,* (on the Account of our Sins, and Afflictions, and Troubles, and the Impediments of our more intimate Enjoyment of God, and therefore) *deſiring to be clothed upon with our Houſe, which is from Heaven.*

We deſire at Death to be removed into thoſe Houſes, which have their Situation in the Heavens, and in which we ſhall be perfectly free from all Temptation, from all Sin, and from all Sorrow, and ſhall have a more full Enjoyment of our God and Saviour.

Serious Chriſtians have the gracious Preſence of God, and an Enjoyment of him, even while their Souls remain in their earthly Houſes, according to the gracious Promiſes of their heavenly Father: And Chriſt is preſent with his Diſciples, even while they remain on Earth; and not only when two or three of them are met together in his Name, according to his Word, but when they are alone, ſpeaking to him by Petitions or Thankſgivings, and he is ſpeaking to them, by his Word and Spirit.

But there is ſo great a Difference in the Degrees of enjoying God, which believing Souls are admitted to when they are reſident in thoſe Buildings, which God has made for them ſituated in the Heavens; that their Enjoyment of God here, is very little in Compariſon with what the Saints are Partakers of in the Heavens: On which Account they may in a comparative Senſe, be ſaid to be abſent from the Lord, while in this World, and to be preſent with him, when they are reſident in their Houſes, which are in the Heavens.

Whether the Souls of the Wicked at Death, will be put into other Habitations, I will not determine; very likely they may; but then it is certain,

tain, that their new Habitations will not be eternal in the Heavens: No; but they will be ſituated among the Devils, who are reſerved to the Day of Judgment.

They will have long Time in their new Houſes; (ſeparated from all Things, that were pleaſant to them in this World,) they will have long Time in them to conſider, for how ſhort a Space they enjoyed their merry Companions, their Diverſions and Pleaſures, or eager Purſuits, after Riches, or Honours, before Death fetched them away; and to conſider for what Trifles, and Vanities, (which endure but for a very little while,) they loſt the Salvation of their Souls, and all the ſolid Bleſſings, Joys, and Glories, fit to give Delight to rational Minds, and which will never fade, and never end. They will have Time to conſider, that they are under the ſame Condemnation with the Devils, and that although they will not have their full Puniſhment till the Day of Judgment, when they and the Devils together, will be caſt into the Lake of Fire, (which indeed, is like to be very many thouſand Years diſtant,) yet that through this exceeding long Duration, they are miſerable beyond Expreſſion, and their active Minds, will reflect on their Sins and Stubborneſs, in refuſing to accept of Chriſt, as their Saviour and their King: Then they will remember their aggravated Iniquities, and their Obſtinacy in refuſing to comply with the kind Invitations of the Goſpel.

Then they will perpetually feel the Reproaches of a Self-accuſing, and Self-condemning Conſcience, and find nothing to divert their tormenting Thoughts, nothing to mitigate, or abate the Horror of their Souls.

O that Perſons negligent of Faith and Holineſs, would think on theſe Things! *Now*, now while the LORD waits to be gracious: Now, while they

have Opportunity of believing in Christ, and becoming his true Disciples; and then they will be in a most safe and happy Condition.

O merciful God! Convert many of these Servants of Satan unto thyself, for Jesus Christ his Sake, Amen.

V. It is predicted, that the Souls of true Believers immediately after Death, will go to be with Christ, where he is.

In Philip. i. 23. The Apostle says, *I am in a Strait between two, having a desire to depart* (out of this World, and out of this natural Body,) *and to be with Christ, which is far better.*

The Words plainly shew, that the Souls of the Saints, when they are departed out of this World, do become present with Christ.

When the Souls of the Righteous are taken out of their natural Bodies, (which were confined to this Earth,) they are conducted into Houses not made with Hands, into Houses whose Situation is in the Heavens, and in which Houses they have abundantly more intimate Enjoyment of their God and Saviour.

Our blessed Redeemer, when he hung on the Cross, suffering Death as a Sacrifice for us, spoke thus to the penitent Thief, who was crucified with him. *Verily I say unto thee, to Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* Luke xxiii. 43. *q. d.* As soon as thy Soul departs from thy Body, it shall be with me in Paradise. But we must observe, that the Happiness which Christ promised to this believing, repenting Malefactor, was not peculiar to him, but what Christ vouchsafes to all who repent of their Sins, and believe in his Name.

In John xii. 26. The blessed Jesus says, *If any Man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my Servant be.*

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Theſe Words manifeſtly ſhew, that the Souls of true Believers are with Chriſt as ſoon as they depart from their dead Bodies; and this is an Evidence, that they are immediately happy after Death; for being with Chriſt they are ſafe from the Aſſaults of the Devil, and they are ſecure from the Temptations of the World, and the Fleſh, and from all Sorrow and Grief; and have no Hindrances to their Communion with God and Chriſt, and the holy Angels, and the Spirits of juſt Men that went before them into Chriſt's more immediate Preſence.

The Conſideration hereof, may convince us, that there is ſolid Ground for that Declaration, in Eccleſ. vii. 1. *The Day of one's Death, is better than the Day of one's Birth.*

The Conſideration of this Truth, may well abate our fears of Dying.

VI. It is predicted, that the Time of the general Reſurrection will be very ſolemn, magnificent and awful; and followed with Events, moſt happy to ſincere Chriſtians.

Our bleſſed Redeemer ſays, *When the Son of Man ſhall come in his Glory, and all the holy Angels with him, then ſhall he ſit upon the Throne of his Glory. And before him ſhall be gathered all Nations, and he ſhall ſeparate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth his Sheep from the Goats: And he ſhall ſet the Sheep at his right Hand, and the Goats on the Left.* Mat. xxv. 31—33.

St. Paul ſays, *The Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangels, and with the Trump of God. And the Dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt.* 1 Theſ. iv. 16. And in 2 Theſ. i. 7. He declares, *That the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels.*

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In Rev. xx. 11. &c. The general Resurrection, and the general Judgment that is to follow, are in Vision predicted thus, ver. 11. *I saw a great white Throne, and him that sat on it, from whose Face the Earth and the Heavens fled away, and there was no Place found for them. And I saw the Dead, small and great stand before God; and the Books were opened; and another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life: And the Dead were judged out of those Things, which were written in the Books, according to their Works. And Death and Hell, were cast into the Lake of Fire: This is the second Death. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life, was cast into the Lake of Fire.*

In Regard to the general Resurrection of the Dead, I may observe two Things, *viz.*

1. That it will be sudden and unexpected; this is predicted.

Our blessed Redeemer says, *As the Days of Noah were, so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the Days, that were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in Marriage, until the Day that Noah entered into the Ark, and knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be.* Mat. xxiv. 37—39.

And in Luke xvii. 28. *Likewise also as it was in the Days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: But the same Day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained Fire and Brimstone out of Heaven, and destroyed them all: Even thus shall it be in the Day when the Son of Man is revealed.*

2. It is foretold, that they, who shall be living at the Time of the Resurrection of the Dead, shall undergo a great *Change* in their Bodies.

Behold,

Behold, (ſays the Apoſtle Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.) *I ſhew you a Myſtery, we ſhall not all Sleep, but we ſhall all be* CHANGED, IN A MOMENT, IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, *at the laſt Trump, (for the Trumpet ſhall ſound) and the Dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible, and we ſhall be changed.*

For the Right underſtanding of the wonderful Prediction contained in theſe Words; a few Things ſhould be conſidered, *viz.*

1. That when the Apoſtle ſays, *We ſhall not all ſleep*, (or die,) he did not mean, or ſpeak of the People of that Generation, who were living at the Time he wrote his Epiſtle; for all the People of that, and the following Generations did die, and fell aſleep in Death; but he ſpoke of the People of all Nations, in the Age, wherein the Reſurrection ſhould happen, that *they* ſhould not all die. Which Interpretation agrees with the Account of our Saviour, who ſpeaks of People marrying, and giving in Marriage; buying, ſelling, eating, and drinking, and planting, and building, when the Son of Man ſhould come at the End of the World.

2. It is declared by the Apoſtle, that they, who ſhall be living (that is, at the Day of the general Reſurrection) ſhall undergo, or experience a great, a wonderful CHANGE in their Bodies, which ſeems to be a Change equivalent to that, which had paſſed on the Bodies of thoſe who had died, and been raiſed again from the Dead. And therefore,

3. That as the Bodies of thoſe who had died, were raiſed *incorruptible*, and had put on Immortality, (ver. 52.) ſo the Bodies of thoſe who ſhall be then living, ſhall have ſuch a Change wrought in them

them, as ſhall render them *incorruptible, and immortal.*

4. We muſt obſerve, that this very great and wonderful Change will be ſuprizingly quick, *for it will be in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye:* The Apoſtle might well introduce this Prediction, with ſaying, *Behold, I ſhew you a Myſtery:* That there will be ſuch a Fact, is no Myſtery after the Apoſtle had foretold it; but how this marvellous and inſtantaneous Change will be produc d, is and will be a Myſtery, that we cannot comprehend.

5. I may add, that the making the Bodies of thoſe who ſhall be raiſed from the Dead, and of thoſe who ſhall be living, *incorruptible* and *immortal*, will be an Event of vaſt Conſequence, both to the Righteous, and to the Wicked.

For the Righteous by having their Bodies (which while they lived in this World, were corruptible and mortal, always liable to Diſeaſes, Death, and Corruption) made *incorruptible* and *immortal*, will never more be liable to Sickneſs and Death. *There ſhall be no more Death.* Rev. xxi. 4. But they ſhall for ever be Partakers with their Souls of all the Bleſſings, of all the Glories and Joys, which Chriſt has purchaſed for his Diſciples, and with them will enjoy our God and Saviour to all Eternity.

And it is implied that their Body thus raiſed, will be a Means of Comfort, and Felicity to them for ever: And as the Souls will have an Advantage from their Bodies, ſo will the Bodies receive Good by means of their Souls.

We know much of the Uſes of the Body to the Soul in this World, but very little of the Uſes of it to the Soul in the next World; when the Saints ſhall be equal to the Angels, when they ſhall

hunger

hunger no more, nor thirſt any more: Only we may conclude, that then there will be reciprocal Advantages between them.

The Bodies of the *Wicked*, will alſo be raiſed *incorruptible* and *immortal*; and as ſuch, each Body will have its own Soul united to it: But the Conſequences of their Reunion, are like to be vaſtly different from thoſe of the Righteous.

The Bodies and Souls of the Wicked after the Reſurrection, will be joint Sufferers of Miſeries and Torments, which no Tongue can expreſs, and no Thought can conceive.

The Body and Soul inſtead of being mutual Comforts, are like to be Torments to each other, and that for ever. And from the Bodies of the Wicked being made *incorruptible* and *immortal*, it ſeems reaſonable to conclude, that they are made capable of ſubſiſting in Fire, and of bearing the Action and Pain of it for ever, without being conſumed.

Doubtleſs the Almighty Power of God can give to the human Body ſuch a Conſiſtence: He preſerved thoſe Jews, *viz.* Shadrach, Meſhach and Abednego, in the Midſt of a fiery Furnace. Dan. iii. 12. &c.

Their Preſervation ſhews the Power of God; and the Conſideration of it is very inſtructive: When theſe pious Jews were threatned by King Nebuchadnezzar to be caſt into a burning fiery Furnace, if they would not worſhip the Idol he had ſet up: They like faithful Servants of the Moſt high God, replied, *If it be ſo, our God whom we ſerve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine Hand, O King: But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip the golden Image, which thou haſt ſet up.*

Hereupon the King, full of Rage and Fury, commanded they ſhould heat the Furnace one ſeven Times more, than it was uſed to be heat.

Into this Furnace, thoſe faithful Jews were caſt bound, in their Coats, their Hoſen, and their Hats, and their other Garments.

And becauſe the King's Commandment was urgent, and the Furnace exceeding hot, the Flame of the Fire ſlew thoſe Men that took up Shedrach, Meſhach, and Abednego: And they walked in the Midſt of the Fire, and had no Hurt. ver. 25.

Nebuchadnezzar, and the Princes, Governors, and the Captains, and the King's Counſellors, being gathered together, ſaw theſe Men, upon whoſe Bodies the Fire had no Power, nor was an Hair of their Head ſinged, neither were their Coats changed, nor the Smell of Fire had paſſed upon them. ver. 27.

We may here obſerve, that there were very many Eye-witneſſes of the Fact, that God preſerved theſe Men alive, and their Garments, and even the Hair of their Heads from being ſinged, while in the Midſt of the fierceſt Fire that could be made.

This Fact proves, that God can make even the *corruptible* and *mortal* Bodies of Men to live in the Midſt of Fire; and a Fire ſo ſtrong, that the Flames of it ſlew thoſe Men, who caſt Shedrach, Meſhach and Abednego into it.

And this is an Evidence, that God can make the *incorruptible* and *immortal* Bodies of the Wicked, to live in Fire everlaſtingly without being conſumed.

The Bodies of thoſe Jews, ſuffered no Pain from the Fire in which they walked; but it will not be ſo with the Bodies of the Wicked, when they ſhall be caſt into the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimſtone: They will there feel the Pains and Torments of the Fire for ever.

But

But if the Word *Fire*, (when mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, as Part of the Punishment of the Damned) be used as a Metaphor, it can administer no Relief or Comfort to the Wicked; because it imports that the Torments of the Damned are so exquisite, that no Words in Language, can convey adequate Ideas of them.

O that Men were wise, wise in Time to consider their latter End, and the Events, the horrible Events, they shall meet with after their Life in this World shall be ended, and after the Judgment of the great Day!

O merciful God, open the Eyes of careless Sinners to see their Danger, to be sensible of the Sinfulness, and Miserableness of their Condition; and to fly from that dreadful Wrath, that will be poured out on those who shall live and die in a Course of Unbelief, and Disobedience; and by the Working of thy holy Spirit prevail with them to fly from the Punishments threatned in thy righteous Law, by flying to Christ with a Faith unfeigned!

Sad, indeed, is the State of those, who are regardless of an Interest in Christ, and of Peace with God!

But glorious Things are predicted for true Believers after the general Resurrection. Particularly,

It is predicted, that Christ will own them in the Day of Judgment.

In Mat. x. 32. Christ says, *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in Heaven.* He will then own them to be his true Disciples, and faithful Servants.

In Rev. iii. 5. He says, *I will confess his Name, before my Father, and before his Angels.* He will do so in the great Day of Judgment, when all the holy Angels shall be present, and be Witnesses

of the righteous Conduct of the bleſſed Jeſus ſitting on his Throne judging all Nations, and every individual Perſon.

He will then own all true Believers, acquit them from all Guilt, and will confeſs they belong to him.

Many glorious Things are foretold of the Saints in the laſt Day, when their Saviour and their Judge will render to every Man according to his Works.

In the Time, when the Dead ſhall be judged, he will give Rewards to his Servants the Prophets, and to the Saints, and them that fear his Name, ſmall and great. As we learn from Rev. xi. 18.

It is predicted, that they ſhall have an INHERITANCE: The Apoſtle Peter ſays, *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively Hope by the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the Dead, to an* Inheritance *incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for you.* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

In Acts xx. 32. St. Paul ſays. *And now Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an* Inheritance *among all them which are ſanctified.* Which ſhews that an Inheritance is appointed for all them that are, and that ſhall be ſanctified.

And when he (in Acts xxvi. 18.) gave an Account of his Converſion, from being a violent Perſecutor of the Chriſtians, to be himſelf a Chriſtian, and made an Apoſtle of that *Jeſus*, whoſe Diſciples he was hunting after, to be caſt into Priſons and puniſhed,) to King Agrippa, and Porcius Feſtus the Governor, and a very auguſt Aſſembly, addreſſing himſelf to King Agrippa, he ſaid, *At Midday, O King, I ſaw in the Way, a Light from Heaven,*

ven, above the Brightness of the Sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me: And when we were all fallen to the Earth, I heard a Voice speaking unto me, and saying, in the Hebrew Tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the Pricks: And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy Feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this Purpose, to make thee a Minister, and a Witness of these Things which thou hast seen, and of those Things in the which I will appear unto thee: Delivering thee from the People, (the Jews) *and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee: To open their Eyes, and to turn them* (Gentiles) *from Darkness to Light; and from the Power of Satan unto God, that they may receive Forgiveness of Sins, and* INHERITANCE *among them which are sanctified by the Faith that is in me.*

Hence it appears, that an Inheritance was appointed for all who become sanctified by Faith in Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles.

And the Words imply a Prediction, that all that are sanctified shall have an Inheritance.

And we Christians, who are Descendants from the Sinners of the Gentiles, are under the greater Obligations to prize and love the blessed Jesus, for that compassionate Regard he shewed to the Gentile Nations, by appointing this Convert to be a Minister, and an Apostle to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, that their Eyes also might be opened, and they brought to believe in Christ, and receive Forgiveness of Sins, and an *Inheritance*, as well as the believing Jews. And we have Reason to be very thankful, that the holy Spirit has made the Preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles, an effectual Means of Salvation, from the first preaching of it to this Day.

In Ephesf. i. 11. The Apostle speaking of Christ, says, *In whom also we have obtained an Inheritance:* Not the actual Possession of it, but a Title to it.

In Colos. iii. 24. He says to the Saints, *Knowing that of the Lord, ye shall receive the Reward of the Inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.* Which Words shew, that the Inheritance was not then in the Possession of the Saints, but that they shall surely have it in due Time: And likewise it will be given them as a Reward, although they deserve nothing. A Reward it will be, not of Debt but of Grace, the free Gift of God.

The Inheritance (so much spoken of in the Holy Scriptures,) is not to be possessed in this World; but serious Christians should pray for it, and hope for it, and bless God, that they have in themselves the Earnest of it.

The Apostle says, to the Saints at Ephesus, *After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the Earnest of our Inheritance, until the Redemption of the purchased Possession, unto the Praise of his Glory.* Ephe. i. 13, 14.

All sincere Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, and his Indwelling may be known to their Consciences, by observing his Fruits in their Souls; and this Indwelling of the Holy Spirit is an Earnest, that they shall hereafter be put into the Possession of the promised Inheritance.

It is a glorious Inheritance; but it cannot be enjoyed on Earth, No; it is reserved in Heaven for them: And at the Day of Judgment Christ will say unto them, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World.* Mat. xx. 34.

Christ (when sitting upon his Throne of Judgment,) will say to the Sheep on his right Hand, (that

(that is, to all the Saints,) *Come ye Bleſſed——inherit the Kingdom prepared for you*; (which implies,) that a Kingdom is the Inheritance preparde for them.

In Luke xii. 32. Chriſt ſays to his Diſciples, to thoſe who believed on him, *Fear not little Flock, for it is your Father's good Pleaſure to give you the Kingdom.* Not immediately, but at the Day of Judgment; when Chriſt ſhall ſay to them, *Come, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.*

The Apoſtle James ſays, *Hearken my beloved Brethren, hath not God choſen the Poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom, which God hath promiſed to them that love him.* James ii. 6.

And ſuitable to ſuch an Inheritance, it is foretold, that they ſhall have a *Crown*; for 2 Tim. iv. 8. The Apoſtle ſays, *Henceforth there is laid up for me, a* Crown *of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me at that Day,* (the Day of Judgment,) *and not to me only, but unto all them alſo that love his appearing.*

In Rev. ii. 10. Chriſt ſays, *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a* Crown *of Life.*

In James i. 12. It is ſaid, *Bleſſed is the Man that endureth Temptation, for when he is tried, he ſhall receive a Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promiſed to* (all) *them that love him.*

It is alſo predicted, that the Saints ſhall reign in Life, in Rom. v. 17. Where the Apoſtle ſays, *For if by one Man's Offence, Death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of Grace, and the Gift of Righteouſneſs, ſhall* reign *in Life by one Jeſus Chriſt.*

In Rev. xxii. 5. It is ſaid, *They ſhall reign for ever and ever.* That is, in the new Jeruſalem. See the Context.

In

In Heb. xii. 28. The Apoſtle ſpeaking in the Name of all true Believers, ſays, *Wherefore we receiving* (the Promiſe of) *a* Kingdom, *which cannot be moved, let us have Grace, whereby we may ſerve God acceptably with Reverence, and Godly Fear.*

From theſe Predictions it evidently appears, that all true Believers at the Day of Judgment, will receive from Chriſt their faithful Redeemer, and righteous Judge, an Inheritance; an Inheritance that fadeth not away; a Kingdom that ſhall not be moved, and a Crown of Righteouſneſs, a Crown of Life, and ſhall reign in Life by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

But who can deſcribe the glorious Inheritance? Who can give an Account of the Nature, and Extent of the Kingdom which the Saints ſhall hereafter poſſeſs?

A Crown is a Sort of Cap, conſtructed with Jewels, and other coſtly Materials, which is ſet on the Heads of Kings, as a Badge or Sign of Majeſty, Authority and Power: But the Crowns that will be given to the Heirs of God, when they ſhall receive the Kingdom prepared for them, will be no ſuch material Ornament: But they will have Crowns more excellent and glorious: But who can explain them?

The Holy Scriptures have not unfolded theſe Things. Things of tranſcendent Value and Glory.

Eye hath not ſeen them, nor hath the Ear heard by any Revelation from God, what they are; nor is it poſſible for human Minds to form any certain Ideas of them.

We cannot live by Sight, we muſt live by Faith: The Things which God hath prepared for them that love him, are far more excellent, than can be expreſſed by the Words *Inheritance*, a *Kingdom*, and a *Crown*. But while we remain in this World, they remain under a Veil. Nevertheleſs

theleſs they are propoſed to us as Objects of our Deſire and Hope, and we ſhould be preparing, and praying, and hoping for them.

But although the future Happineſs of the Saints does in Part remain a Myſtery, yet there is ſo much of it revealed in the Holy Scriptures, as may well make us aſtoniſhed at the Riches of the divine Goodneſs, and as may excite in us earneſt Longings to be Partakers of them.

We that believe in Chriſt, have in Poſſeſſion, even now while we are paſſing through the Wilderneſs of this World, much to rejoice in, and comfort our Souls. For we have an Almighty and a moſt loving Saviour, a faithful Redeemer, who will keep what we have committed to him. — We have an Intereſt in all the Promiſes of the Goſpel: Many and precious Promiſes, which are yea, and amen, ſure and certain in Chriſt Jeſus. We have God for our Father, and are made his Children and Heirs.

The Lord is my Portion ſaith my Soul, therefore will I hope in him. Lament. iii. 24.

O how many joyous Predictions concerning the Saints, do we find in the Word of God? They ſhall have Treaſures in Heaven, as we may conclude from Chriſt's ſaying to the Multitude, who heard his Sermon on the Mount, Mat. vi. 19, 20. *Lay not up for yourſelves Treaſures upon Earth, where Moth, and Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and ſteal: But lay up for yourſelves Treaſures in Heaven, where neither Moth, nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through, nor ſteal.*

The Inſtruction of our Saviour in theſe Words, import, that there are Treaſures in Heaven, and a Prediction, that they who diligently uſe the Means ſhall obtain them.

It is alſo predicted, that the Saints ſhall judge the World, and judge Angels: In 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3. Where the Apoſtle ſays to the Church of God at Corinth, to them that are ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus, (chap. 1. ver. 2.) *Do ye not know, that the Saints ſhall judge the World?—Know ye not that we ſhall judge Angels?*

Theſe Interrogations imply, that there was a Prediction, that the Saints ſhall judge the World, and judge Angels: And that the Truth predicted, was well known to the Chriſtians at Corinth.

I do not pretend to explain the Things predicted, but obſerve, that they imply great Honour and Glory, intended for the Saints.

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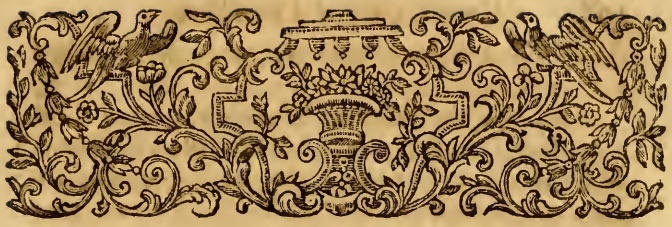


LETTER VIII.

Of Predictions of Events, subsequent to the Day of Judgment, which will be astonishingly terrible to the Wicked, and inexpressibly happy and glorious to the Saints.

I MAY now observe, that there are Predictions of Events, subsequent to the Day of Judgment: Events, that will be brought to pass at the End of the World, astonishingly terrible to the Wicked, and inexpressibly happy and glorious to the Saints.

As to the Wicked it is foretold, *That the Heavens and the Earth which now are, by the same Word* (of God) *are kept in Store, reserved unto Fire against the Day of Judgment, and Perdition of ungodly Men.* 2 Pet. iii. 7. Who at the Day of Judgment will be condemned to that dreadful Fire.

In ver. 10. It is said, *But the Day of the Lord, will come as a Thief in the Night, in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt away with fervent Heat, the*

Earth alſo and the Works that are therein ſhall be burnt up.

And in this burning World it plainly ſeems, that the Damned are to have their Habitation: Here ſeems to be the Lake, that burneth with Fire and Brimſtone.

In Rev. xxi. 8. It is ſaid, *But the Fearful and Unbelieving, and the Abominable, and Murderers, and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and Idolaters, and all Liars, ſhall have their Part in the Lake, which burneth with Fire and Brimſtone; which is the ſecond Death.*

The Predictions relative to the Saints, ſubſequent to the Day of Judgment, may well excite Joy.

For behold, (ſays God,) *I create new Heavens, and a new Earth, and the former ſhall not be remembered, nor come into Mind.—But be you glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold I create Jeruſalem a Rejoycing, and her People a Joy.* Iſa. lxv. 17, 18.

And the Apoſtle Peter ſays, *Nevertheleſs, we according to his Promiſe* (in the laſt cited Text,) *look for new Heavens, and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs.* 2 Pet. iii. 13.

In Rev. xxi. 1. *&c.* The Predictions are thus expreſſed, viz. *And I ſaw a new Heaven, and a new Earth: for the firſt Heaven and the firſt Earth were paſſed away; and there was no more Sea.* (No Water to quench, or abate the Fire of the burning Earth.) *And I John ſaw the holy City, new Jeruſalem, coming down from God, out of Heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Huſband: And I heard a great Voice out of Heaven, ſaying, behold, the Tabernacle of God is with Men, and he will dwell with them, and they ſhall be his People, and God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be their God: And God ſhall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes;*

and

and there ſhall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither ſhall there be any more Pain, for the former Things are paſſed away. And he that ſat upon the Throne, ſaid, behold I make all Things new: And he ſaid unto me, Write; for theſe Words are true and faithful. And he ſaid unto me, it is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End: I will give unto him that is athirſt, of the Fountain of the Water of Life freely. He that overcometh ſhall inherit all Things, and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my Son.

The great, the marvellouſly great, the inexpreſſibly great Events, which will follow the Day of Judgment, although they are now many Thouſands of Years diſtant, yet will ſurely be brought to paſs. Nevertheleſs, they ſhould have the ſame Influence on us, as if they were to happen at the End of our Lives: Becauſe we have only the ſhort and uncertain Time of our Continuance in this World, for ſeeking an Intereſt in Chriſt, and the Pardon of our Sins, and Peace with God, and the Sanctification of our Natures, and the Salvation of our Souls.

We have only the very little Time of our ſojourning on Earth, for ſecuring a Deliverance from all the Curſes, the Miſeries, the Puniſhments, and Torments predicted againſt the Unbelieving, the Impenitent, and Diſobedient in this Life, and againſt them after Death, and after the Reſurrection, and after the Day of Judgment, and the End of the World.

We have only a ſhort Space of Time for laying up for ourſelves Treaſures in Heaven, and obtaining a Share in all the Bleſſings, the Felicities, the Joys, and Glories predicted for ſincere Chriſtians in this Life, and after Death, and after the Reſurrection, and after the Day of Judgment, and the End of the World: But ſhort as it is, it

is

is long enough to escape Misery, and obtain all Happiness; if Sinners immediately repent of their Sins, and believe in Christ, and in an humble Dependance on his Spirit, and Grace, do henceforth live according to the Rules of the Gospel.

And therefore the present, I say the present Time, should be improved for this most important Work. It is very uncertain to every one, whether there is any future Time, or how little of future Time is allotted to them in this World, by the sovereign Lord of Life?

O how should the Thoughts hereof, quicken every one to give all Diligence to make their Calling and Election sure!

I may observe, that the End of the World, and the general Conflagration of it, was above seventeen hundred Years more future than it is now, when the Apostle Peter wrote his second Epistle; yet he used the Consideration of it, as a Motive to an holy Life.

In 2 Pet. iii. 11. He says, *Seeing then that all these Things will be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness?* And in ver. 14. He says, *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such Things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and blameless.*

It it predicted, that *eternal Life* shall be given to all true Believers.

In John vi. 40. The holy Jesus says, *This is the Will of him that sent me, that every one, which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting Life: And I will raise him up at the last Day.* And in ver. 47. He expresseth himself thus, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting Life.* That is, he hath a Title, or a Right to it, and it is begun in him.

St.

St. John ſays, *This is the Promiſe that He,* (viz. God,) *hath promiſed us, even eternal Life.* 1 John ii. 25. and in chap. v. 11. He adds. *And this is the Record, that God hath given to us* (by Promiſe) *eternal Life; and this Life is in his Son.*

In Rom. v. 22. St. Paul ſays to the Saints at Rome. *But being made free from* (that is, from the Dominion of) *Sin, and become Servants to God, you have your Fruit unto Holineſs, and the End everlaſting Life: For the Wages of Sin is Death; but the Gift of God is eternal Life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

It muſt here be obſerved, that the Expreſſion, *eternal Life*, ſignifies more than an endleſs Exiſtence, more than that the Saints ſhall live for ever after the Reſurrection; and implies, that the everlaſting Life which God infinitely good and gracious, gives unto them is a ſpiritual Life, a Life of Holineſs and Happineſs: I apprehend that it begins in Converſion, with the firſt Act of true Faith, by which Sinners (before guilty, wretched and miſerable,) become united to Chriſt, and living Branches of this bleſſed Vine; and thus ſhew when they are in the Character of the *Juſt, whoſe Path is as the ſhining Light, that ſhineth more and more unto a perfect Day.* Prov. iv. 18.

Their Sanctification through the Working of the Holy Spirit is carried on, divine Bleſſings are multiplied to them, and at Death the Holineſs of the Saints is made perfect, and their Happineſs with Chriſt in Heaven is inconceivably increaſed; and then after the Reſurrection of their Bodies, and their Appearance at the Judgment Seat before their Saviour and their Judge; the Fulneſs of the Rewards purchaſed by Chriſt, and promiſed in the Goſpel, will be beſtowed on them: And then the Saints with their Souls and Bodies reunited, will be with God, and Chriſt, with the holy Angels,

gels, with the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apoſtles, and all their fellow Saints, in Manſions of Glory for ever and ever: And there will never, never, never be a Period to their Happineſs, and Glory, in the Enjoyment of God: All this I take to be included in theſe Expreſſions, *eternal Life*, and *Life everlaſting*.

But the Apoſtle lets us know, that *eternal Life* is not given to the Saints as *Wages* for any Work, or Service they did on Earth; for the beſt Services of the beſt Chriſtians, are not only worthleſs Performances, and void of Merit, but polluted by Mixture of Sin: And therefore though he calls, and juſtly calls Death the Wages of Sin, he changes his Phraſe, and calls eternal Life the *Gift of God*, and moſt fitly he does ſo; becauſe it is undeſerved by us, and moſt freely beſtowed us. (Rom. v. 22.)

I may likewiſe remark, that the Wicked will have an eternal Exiſtence; but not worthy of the Name of Life, and is properly denoted by the Word, *Death*.

The Death of a Man in this World, is the Separation of his Soul from his Body, which ſoon after putrifies, turns into Corruption and Earth, as it was.

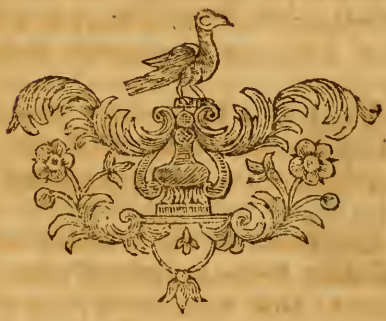
But the Death of the Wicked, is the Separation of their Perſons, both of their Souls and Bodies from God and Chriſt; from Peace and Happineſs, to endleſs Puniſhments, Miſeries and Torments. This is the Death of Deaths, the moſt dreadful of all Deaths; and it is the Wages of Sin.

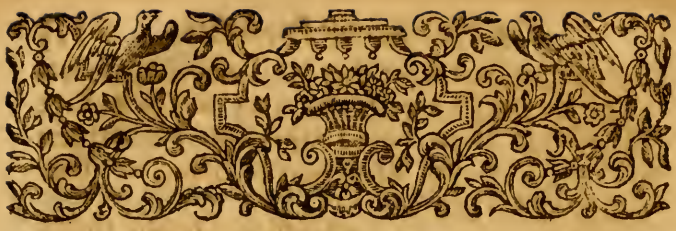
O that careleſs Sinners would think on this Death in Time!

O merciful God! open the Eyes of their Minds, awaken their Conſciences to conſider whom they

are

are ſerving, and what they are doing, and what *Wages* they muſt receive for the evil Works they do! O turn them from Darkneſs to Light; and from the Power of Satan unto thyſelf, that they may receive Forgiveneſs of Sins, and Inheritance among them that are ſanctified by Faith, that is in Chriſt Jeſus. Amen, for the Sake of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.





LETTER IX.

Of Predictions, relative to sincere Christians in Time of publick Calamities; some of which are general, and others particular. In Regard,

1. *To their Safety in Times of War.* 2. *To their being provided for in Famines.* 3. *To their Preservation in Seasons of the Pestilence.* 4. *To their being kept from distressing Fears, when desolating Judgments are on the Wicked.*

I SHALL now take Notice of some of the Predictions, relative to God's faithful People, in Times of publick Calamities; of Calamities brought on Cities and Countries, by the righteous Providence of God, as Punishments for Sin.

There are Times when the all-wise God calls his People, his beloved People to Sufferings; and such are the Times when the Wicked are persecuting the Saints of the most high God.

Our blessed Redeemer who went about from City to City, and from Town to Town; teaching the People the Doctrines they were to believe, and the Way for their Salvation foretold them;

not

not of worldly Prosperity, not that they should gain Honours or Riches, if they would become his Disciples: No; but he plainly forewarned them of Troubles, and of great Troubles, if they would be his Disciples.

In Mat. xvi. 24, 25. *Then Jesus said unto his Disciples, if any Man will come after me,* (and be my Disciple indeed,) *let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me:* (in the Way of Sufferings.) *For whosoever will save his Life,* (by forsaking me,) *shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his Life* (and suffer Death) *for my Sake, shall find it,* happily and joyfully in the next World.)

In Mat. x. 38. Jesus says, *He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* And in Luke xiv. 27. He says, *Whosoever doth not bear his Cross,* (when called to it by divine Providence,) *and come after me, cannot be my Disciple.* In Mark xiii. 9. *But take Heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to Councils; and in the Synagogues ye shall be beaten, and ye shall be brought before Rulers, and Kings for my Sake.* In John xvi. 2. He says, *They shall put you out of the Synagogues, yea the Time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God Service.*

Most frequently did our blessed Saviour, inculcate the Expectation of Sufferings, and Troubles on those that would be his Disciples. *In this World, ye shall have Tribulation.* He said in John xvi. 33.

The Apostle likewise testified the same: For they went about *confirming the Souls of the Disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the Faith; and that we must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.* Acts xiv. 22.

And this Conduct is an evident Proof, that Christ was a Teacher come from God; and that the Gospel is no Imposture, but most certainly

rtue. Would any Impoſtor ever teach a Syſtem of Notions, and expect to make Proſelytes by telling his Hearers, that if they will believe and profeſs his Doctrine, they will be expoſed to manifold Troubles, that it would bring on them the Hatred of Magiſtrates, and occaſion to them the Loſs of their Houſes, their Lands, their Liberty and Lives.

No Impoſtor ever talked in ſuch a Strain: The Devil, the ſubtile Devil, that he may keep Men in Bondage to himſelf, and prevail with them to go on in Unbelief and Diſobedience to God, excites in them the Deſire and Hope of ſenſual Pleaſures, or of Riches and Honours. When he tempted our Maſter and Lord, it was with the Things of this World: *For when he had taken him up into an exceeding high Mountain, and ſhewed him* (a Repreſentation of) *all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them.* This lying Spirit ſaid unto him, *All theſe Things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worſhip me.* Mat. iv. 8, 9.

But our great Redeemer and his Apoſtles, in preaching the everlaſting Goſpel, propoſed no worldly Advantages to induce their Hearers to believe and obey it, but gave undeniable Proofs of the Truth of it, and propoſed ſpiritual Bleſſings in this World, and a Happineſs in the Enjoyment of God for ever. They propoſed to their Hopes thoſe great Mercies which guilty miſerable Sinners ſtand in need of; they propoſed Forgiveneſs of their Sins, Peace, and Reconciliation with God, and eternal Life: Bleſſings ſuitable to the wretched Caſe of Men, under the Guilt of Sin, under the Condemnation of the Divine Law, obnoxious to the Wrath of God, and the Pains of Hell for ever. And I may add, that the Preaching of the Goſpel, was accompanied with the mighty Working of the

Holy

Holy Ghost; the Lord himself bearing Testimony to the Truth of the Word of his Grace; for every Convert was a Seal and Evidence of the Verity of the Gospel.

But a Time of Persecution of the Saints is not a Day of God's Visitation for Sin: There is no Divine Wrath in the bitter Cup of their Sufferings: *No*; but there is wonderful Love in it.

In such Times, God gives his faithful Servants extraordinary Communications of Grace and Strength, and often fills them with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory: He enables them to take joyfully the spoiling of their Goods, and to rejoice in Tribulation, and to count it an Honour to suffer Shame and Death for the Name of Christ, whom their Souls admire and adore, as the Author of Salvation, and everlasting Happiness to them.

And it is predicted, that they who have testified the Sincerity of their Faith in Christ, and Love to him, by laying down their Lives for his Sake, shall live, shall live again before the general Resurrection; for it is said, in Rev. xx. 4. *I saw the Souls of them that were beheaded for the Witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshiped the Beast, neither his Image, neither had received his Mark upon their Foreheads, or in their Hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand Years.* And in the next Verse it is added; *But the rest of the Dead lived not again, till the thousand Years were finished.*

They that suffer Death in the Cause, and for the Sake of Christ, will have peculiar Rewards, and a more exceeding Weight of Glory.

St. Paul says, *If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together; for I reckon that the Sufferings of the present Time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed*

revealed in us. Rom. viii. 17, 18. (It will be ſo exceeding great.)

The Saints are always the Objects of the Love and ſpecial Care and Goodneſs of God. And in the Times of publick Calamities, various Predictions relative to them, do ſhew the compaſſionate and faithful Regards which our Father in Heaven, has for them while they remain in this World, even when he is executing his Judgments on wicked Cities and Countries.

Manifold are the Judgments of God for Sin: The moſt frequent are the SWORD of War, the *Peſtilence*, the *Famine* and *Fire*.

But the mighty God takes Care of his People in ſuch dreadful, ſuch deſolating Seaſons.

There are in every Country, and in every City, a great Variety of Sorts of People, both among the High and the Low: But in God's Account, they are diſtinguiſhed only into two Sorts, *viz.* his faithful People, who know, and love, and ſerve him; who keep his Covenant and his Teſtimonies; and thoſe who live in a Courſe of wilful Diſobedience to his holy Commandments.

And when the Providence of God brings his deſtroying Judgments into any Nation or Town, it is to puniſh and deſtroy the Wicked; and it is a Day of the Lord's Viſitation for Sin.

We may be ſure that the Lord has a Controverſy with every Place into which he brings the Sword, the Miſeries of War, or of the Peſtilence, or of Famine, or of any other deſtructive Calamity.

And we know that in ſuch dreadful Times, the Lord's Controverſy is not with the Righteous: The Vials of his Wrath are not intended to be poured out on them: No; God will take a ſpecial Care of them.

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The *Predictions* which have been taken Notice of in the foregoing Papers, may be as ſo many Cordials to conſolate their Minds, in Days of the moſt terrible Calamities.

God is our Refuge and Strength, a very preſent Help in Trouble. Pſa. xlvi. 1.

And there are Predictions on Record in the Holy Scriptures, which ſhew the Regard which the Almighty and all-gracious God has for his faithful Servants.

God, before he inflicts Puniſhments on any ſinful People, gives them Warning by his Servants the Prophets: So he did in the Times of the Old Teſtament.

But the divine Threatnings, I think, are not to be interpreted, as if it was intended that every individual wicked Perſon ſhould be deſtroyed.

Sometimes God has threatned Judgments to take away the *fourth* Part of Men. Rev. vi. 8. Sometimes a *third* Part of the People. Rev. ix. 5. Which implies, that the merciful God would ſuffer very many individual Perſons to eſcape.

And it is foretold of thoſe that ſhould eſcape, that they would remain impenitent and unreformed. Rev. ix. 19, 20. It is ſaid, *And the reſt of Men which were not killed by theſe Plagues, yet repented not of the Works of their Hands, that they ſhould not worſhip Devils, and Idols of Gold, and Silver, and Braſs, and Stone and Wood; which neither can ſee, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their Murders, nor of their Sorceries, nor of their Fornications, nor of their Thefts.*

And as to the Promiſes made to the Righteous, it does not appear to me, that they are to be interpreted as if no ſincere Chriſtians will ſuffer by Means of the Calamities, which will be inflicted on the Wicked in the Day of their Viſitation: For many are the Afflictions of the Righteous,

even in Times of publick Tranquility, and of publick Prosperity; and they are at all Times liable to Losses, Disappointments, a Variety of Troubles, Diseases, and Death.

But this I may say, that they are not the Objects of the divine Wrath; they are not that Part of the People God is contending with, when he is pouring out the Vials of his Indignation on incorrigible Sinners.

But they are that Sort of People, which God will take a special Care of in Times of publick Calamities, and of Distress in Nations and Cities: God would not destroy Sodom, till he had removed Lot out of it.

And there are many Predictions of our Father which is in Heaven, which shews his Regard to his beloved Children, and what they may hope for and expect in those melancholy Days, when they shall be surrounded with Multitudes of Examples of divine Vengance, ruining particular Persons, Families and Towns.

As to the Righteous it is predicted, that when God's Judgments shall be executed, it shall be *well with them.*

In Isa. iii. 10, 11. God gives these Predictions to his Prophets, in respect to the Time of his Judgments on Judah and Jerusalem: *Say ye to the Righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the Fruit of their Doings: Wo unto the Wicked it shall be ill with him; for the Reward of his Hands shall be given him.*

The Words shew that God, most Merciful, will have his People comforted with the Assurance from him, that when it goes ill with the Wicked, suffering under destroying Judgments, it shall at the same Time go well with the Righteous: And that Expression, *Say ye*, shews that it was the Duty not only of Isaiah, but of all other Prophets and Ministers

Miniſters of God, to declare to the People the ſame Aſſurance.

And the Words do likewiſe ſhew, that it is the Duty of the Miniſters of Chriſt in all Ages, and in all Countries, when they learn from the Threatnings of God's Word, and from the Wickedneſs of the Generality of People among whom they dwell, and from the Operations of the divine Providence, that deſtroying Judgments are approaching; it is their Duty then to ſpeak comfortably to the Godly, and declare to them, that whatever Calamities ſhall come, it will go well with them; though it will go ill with the Wicked.

I ſhall now collect the Predictions about the Righteous in Times of publick Calamities, under the following Heads, *viz.*

1. It is predicted, that they ſhall be preſerved in *Safety* in Times of WAR; they ſhall be ſafe, though ſurrounded with Dangers.

In Prov. xviii. 10. It is ſaid, *The Name of the Lord is a ſtrong Tower; the Righteous runneth into it, and is ſafe.* The Words ſignify a Prediction to the Righteous, that if they by Prayer, and Faith ſeek to God for his Protection, they ſhall find Safety.

In Prov. xxix. 25. It is ſaid, *Whoſo putteth his Truſt in the Lord, ſhall be ſafe.* All the Righteous do put their Truſt in him; therefore the Promiſe is a Prediction of Safety to them.

In 2 Chron. xvi. 9. It is ſaid, *The Eyes of the* LORD *run to and fro throughout the whole Earth to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in the Behalf of them, whoſe Heart is perfect towards him.* Which Words imply God's watchful Providence over the Righteous, and that he will manifeſt the Greatneſs of his

Power in protecting them from the Dangers they may meet with.

In 1 Sam. ii. 9. It is ſaid, *He will keep the Feet of his Saints, and the Wicked ſhall be ſilent in Darkneſs.*

In Pſal. xci. 1. It is ſaid, *He that dwelleth in the ſecret Place of the moſt High, ſhall abide* (in ſafety) *under the Shadow of the Almighty.*

Verſe 2. *I will ſay of the* LORD, *he is my Refuge, and my Fortreſs, my* GOD, *in him will I truſt.* Verſe 4. *He ſhall cover thee with his Feathers, and under his Wings ſhall thou truſt: His Truth ſhall be thy Shield and Buckler.* Verſe 10. *There ſhall no Evil befal thee.* Theſe Words teach us our Duty of truſting in God, and imply a Prediction of Safety to righteous Perſons, who do ſo. Pſa. cxxi. Is full of Predictions of the like Import.

God's faithful Care of his Church and People, is likewiſe predicted, in Iſa. xxvii. 3. *I the* LORD *do keep it, I will water it every Moment, leſt any hurt it, I will keep it Night and Day.*

In Zech. ii. 5. The Almighty ſpeaketh thus, *For I ſaith the Lord, will be unto her* (i. e. his Church,) *a Wall of Fire round about, and will be the Glory in the Midſt of her.*

In Job v. 20. It is ſaid, *In* WAR *he ſhall redeem thee from the Power of the Sword.*

In Prov. iii. 25, 26. It is ſaid, *Be not afraid of ſudden Fear, nor of the Deſolation of the Wicked, when it cometh: For the* LORD *ſhall be thy Confidence, and ſhall keep thy Foot from being taken.*

The Righteous in Countries that are the Seat of War, when oppoſite Armies are Marching and Counter-marching, and are frequently Fighting with each other, the Righteous are in the Midſt of Perils and Dangers; but in the Midſt of all theſe Perils and Dangers, and even in Battle, if God

God will preſerve them, they are as ſafe, as if there were none.

Every Bullet that is ſhot, and every Stroke of the Sword had it's Direction from the Providence of God: Since one Sparrow ſhall not fall on the Ground, without our Father which is in Heaven; (Mat. x. 29.) ſince not one of them is forgotten before God; (Luke xii. 6.) ſince no Evil happens to thoſe little Birds, without his Providence; we may be ſure, that no Wound, no Hurt, happens to any Perſon in a Battle without it.

It is the Providence of God which takes away thoſe, who are ſlain in War, and which preſerves thoſe, who eſcape unhurt.

In Mat. xxiv. 40, 41. It is ſaid, *Then two ſhall be in the Field, the one ſhall be taken, and the other left; two Women ſhall be grinding at the Mill, the one ſhall be taken, and the other left.* And it is God who determines which of them ſhall be taken, and which of them ſhall be left.

In perilous Times, the Righteous may uſe the Words of David, and ſay, *The* LORD *is my Light, and my Salvation, whom ſhall I fear? The* LORD *is the Strength of my Life, of whom ſhall I be afraid?* Pſa. xxvii. 1. And they may be confident, that the LORD will fulfil all his Predictions.

2. It is predicted, that the Righteous ſhall be provided for in Times of Calamities by FAMINE. Famine, is a Judgment very terrible; but bleſſed be the Name of our bountiful God, we of this Generation have never ſeen the moſt deplorable Effects of it.

It may help us to ſome right Apprehenſions and Senſe of it, if we read what is ſaid of it by the Prophet.

The Prophet Jeremiah deſcribes the Miſeries of a Famine in Lament. iv. Where he ſays, *The*

Tongue of the ſuckling Child, cleaveth to the Roof of his Mouth for Thirſt; the young Children aſk Bread, and no Man breaketh it unto them. ver. 4.

They that did feed delicately, are deſolate in the Streets; they that were brought up in Scarlet, embrace Dunghills. ver. 5.

For the Puniſhment of the Iniquity of the Daughter of my People, is greater than the Puniſhment of the Sin of Sodom, that was overthrown in a Moment. ver. 6.

Their Viſage is blacker than a Coal; they are not known in the Streets, their Skin cleaveth to their Bones; (their Fleſh being waſted for want of Food,) *it is withered, it is become like a Stick.* ver. 8.

They that be ſlain with the Sword, are better than they that be ſlain with Hunger. For theſe pine away, ſtricken through, for Want of the Fruits of the Field. ver. 9.

The Hands of the pitiful Women have ſodden their own Children; they were their Meat, in the Deſtruction of the Daughter of my People. ver. 10.

O how tremendous are the Miſeries of a great Famine! And War often brings on a Famine, even in the moſt fruitful Countries.

But it is predicted, that God will provide for his own People in ſuch deſolating and dreadful Times.

In Pſa. xxxiii. 18, 19. It is ſaid, *Behold the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him: Upon them that hope in his Mercy; to deliver their Souls from Death, and to keep them alive in Famine.*

In Pſa. xxxvii. 19. It is ſaid of them, *They ſhall not be aſhamed in the evil Time: And in the Days of Famine they ſhall be ſatisfied.*

In Iſa. xli. 17. *When the Poor and Needy ſeek Water, and there is none, and their Tongues faileth*

for Thirſt, I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Iſrael will not forſake them.

Theſe Predictions imply, that God will preſerve the Righteous, and provide neceſſary Food for them, even when there ſhall be the greateſt Scarcity.

And our gracious God has recorded them in his Word, for the Comfort of his People againſt the Terrors of ſuch a Judgment: They may be ſure that God is faithful to his promiſe, and will fulfil all his Predictions: His Wiſdom knows how to contrive Ways and Means for their Supply; and his Power is able to procure all that ſhall be needful for them.

3. It is predicted, that the Righteous ſhall be preſerved in Times of the PESTILENCE.

In Pſalm xci. 2. The Sentiments, and pious Reſolution of the Righteous are thus expreſſed. ver. 2. *I will ſay of the* LORD, *he is my Refuge, and my Fortreſs, my God, in him will I truſt.* And this is the Language of every one of God's faithful People.

In this Pſalm are many comfortable Predictions relative to them. In ver. 3, &c. it is ſaid, *Surely he ſhall deliver thee from the Snare of the Fowler; and from the noiſome Peſtilence. He ſhall cover thee with his Feathers, and under his Wings ſhalt thou truſt: His Truth ſhall be thy Shield and Buckler: Thou ſhalt not be afraid for the Terror by Night; nor for the Arrow that flyeth by Day: Nor for the Peſtilence that walketh in Darkneſs; nor for the Deſtruction, that waſteth at noon Day. A Thouſand ſhall fall by thy Side, and ten Thouſand at thy right Hand; but it ſhall not come nigh thee. Only with thine Eyes ſhalt thou behold and ſee the Reward of the Wicked.* (ver. 8.) *Becauſe thou haſt made the Lord, which is my Refuge, even the moſt High, thy Habitation:* (by Faith and

and Prayer, trusting in him, and praying to him in the Way of Holiness.) *There shall no Evil befall thee, neither shall any Plague come nigh thy Dwelling. For he,* (God) *shall give his Angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy Ways.*

If some particular Persons should die by a pestilential Fever, they will be immediately happy in a better World.

But it is evident from ver. 8. 1st. That when God sends the Pestilence into any City, or Country, it is not against the Righteous: No; they are the Sort of People, God has appointed for his Protection. And 2dly. It is manifest that the Wicked are the Sort who are appointed to die by the Pestilence.

It appears from ver. 5. That God would not have the Righteous to be afraid, when the Pestilence comes into the Town, and Country where they dwell: And he assures them of Safety; that he will surely deliver them: (ver. 3.) That though Multitudes may die round about them, yet the Arrows of Destruction shall not come nigh them: Only with their Eyes shall they see Examples of God's Vengeance among the Wicked, and that no Evil shall befal them, or come nigh their Dwelling. God will give his Angels charge over them; this will be their security.

Comfortable Promises these are! Blessed be our good God for them! And they will most faithfully be performed: And therefore I need only to observe, that it is our Interest and Duty to make it sure, that we are of that Number to which they belong.

4. It is Predicted, that the Righteous shall be preserved from *distressing Fears* in Times of publick Calamities.

FEAR

FEAR *hath Torment.* 1 John iv. 18. Perils and Dangers naturally excite Fear.

And the greater, and more terrible the Evils are, the greater is the Pain and Anguish of the Mind at their Approach.

The Time of publick Judgments, is a Time of dismal Fears to the Wicked: When the Almighty cometh forth to take Vengeance on them; when the Vials of his Wrath are pouring forth among them, they will fear; *Fearfulness will surprize the Hypocrites.* Isa. xxxiii. 14.

In some Circumstances of Affliction, a good Man may be greatly distressed with Fears: And this seems to have been the Case with David. Psa. lv. 5. When he said, *Fearfulness and Trembling are upon me, and Horror hath overwhelmed me.* But every sincere Christian may pray, and obtain freedom from his Fears.

Fears also may arise in the Minds of pious Persons, under the Apprehention of Miseries like to befal the People of the Land in which they dwell; which seems to be the Case of the Prophet. Isa. xxi. 4. Where he says, *My Heart panteth; Fearfulness affrighted me; the Night of my Pleasure hath he turned into Fear unto me.* That is, by his being informed of the Judgments God was then about to bring on his People.

But such Fears, are not the Fears of guilty Sinners going on in their Trespasses, which they feel, when their Consciences are made sensible of their Guilt.

God has promised Peace and Comfort to his own Children and Servants, even when he is punishing his, and their Enemies.

It is a comfortable Prediction relative to a righteous Man, in Psa. cxii. 7. Where it is said, *He shall not be afraid of evil Tidings; his Heart is fixed trusting in the* LORD.

There

There is a Fear consistent with inward Tranquility and Comfort of Soul; there is a Fear which is our Duty.

It is said, *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him.* (Deut. vi. 13.) Our good God is the supreme Object of our Fear: And the Duty of fearing him is most frequently inculcated in the Holy Scriptures.

And the Beginning the Practice of this Duty, is the Beginning of Wisdom. The Whole of serious practical Piety, is often denoted by the Expression the *Fear* of God.

And many Things are predicted, for the engaging People to this Duty, Solomon says, *Yet surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.* Eccle. viii. 13. *Surely his Salvation is nigh them that fear him.* It is said, Psa. lxxxv. 8.

There is also a Fear due to Magistrates; a great Respect to their Authority; *For Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil: Will thou then not be afraid of the Power?* Says the Apostle Paul, Rom. xiii. 3. Thereby teaching Christians that they ought to have a Fear of their Power, and not incur their Displeasure by any evil Doings.

A Fear is likewise due to Parents. In Levit. xix. 1, 2, 3. *The* LORD *spake unto Moses saying, speak unto all the Congregation of the Children of Israel, and say unto them, ye shall be holy; for I the* LORD *your God am holy. Ye shall fear every Man his Mother, and his Father, and keep my Sabbaths: I am the* LORD *thy God. Ye shall fear every Man his Mother, and his Father.*

These Words are one of the Commandments and Laws of God, and he has never repealed it: The Reasons of it are always the same, and so is the Obligation to obey it: It implies that Respect, that

that Awe, and Regard to Parents, which ſhall reſtrain us from giving them any juſt Occaſion of Offence, and Grief, and ſhall conſtrain us to contribute to their Support and Comfort, as much as they ſhall want, and we ſhall be able to contribute.

There is another LAW in this Book of *Leviticus*, and it may not generally be known; becauſe all the holy Laws of God are not generally read in the worſhiping Aſſemblies of Chriſtians; and yet this is an important One, and the Reaſons of it have always the ſame Weight.

In Levit. x. 8, 9, 10, 11. *The* LORD *ſpake unto Aaron, ſaying, Do not drink Wine, nor ſtrong Drink, thou, nor thy Sons with thee, when ye go into the Tabernacle of the Congregation, leſt ye die: It ſhall be a Statute for ever throughout your Generations: And that ye may put Difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean. And that ye may teach the Children of Iſrael all the Statutes, which the* LORD *hath ſpoken unto them by the Hand of Moſes.*

If the Prieſts of God, under the Old Teſtament, and the Miniſters of Chriſt under the New, had the Liberty of drinking ſtrong Liquors before they went into the Congregation to adminiſter the Ordinances of divine Worſhip, and to teach the People the revealed Will of God, they might be tempted to drink too much, and become incapable of a due Performance of their Office; and if they were earneſt in their Exhortations, the People might be tempted to think their Zeal and Fervour did not proceed from the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit of God, but from the Spirits of the ſtrong Liquors they drank.

But God by his Law abſolutely forbidding them to drink Wine, or ſtrong Drink, effectually prevents theſe ill Conſequences, if they

who officiate publickly in the divine Worſhip, do obſerve this Law.

I have mentioned the proper Objects of Fear, I ſhall now ſhew whom we ought not to fear: And we ought not to fear either wicked Men, or wicked Devils.

We ought not to fear *wicked Men. Fear not them which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul: But rather fear him which is able to deſtroy both Soul and Body in Hell*; ſays our bleſſed Saviour. Mat. x. 28.

Our good God ſays to his People, (in Iſa. li. 12.) *I even I am he that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou ſhouldeſt be afraid of Man, that ſhall die, and of the Son of Man, which ſhall be made as Graſs?*

In Iſa. xli. 10. God ſays to his People, *Fear thou not* (thine Enemies,) *for I am with thee, be not diſmayed for I am thy God; I will ſtrengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right Hand of my Righteouſneſs. Behold, all they that were incenſed againſt thee, ſhall be aſhamed and confounded, they ſhall be as nothing, and they that ſtrive with thee, ſhall periſh.*

O what a Cluſter of comfortable Predictions are theſe! and they have been, they are, and they will be fulfilled to the Saints in all Ages; and the Saints in all Ages have found much Conſolation in muſing upon them.

But as we ſhould not be afraid of wicked Men, ſo neither ſhould we fear the *wicked Devils*, thoſe unholy Angels: There are Multitudes of them in all Places, though they are ſpoken of in the ſingular Number, as if there was but one, becauſe one among them is their Chief, the Prince of Devils; and becauſe they are all one in Deſign; but as numerous as they are, we have no Reaſon to fear them.

In

In James iv. 7. It is ſaid, *Reſiſt the Devil, and he will flee from you.* Which Words contain a Prediction, that the Devil will flee from thoſe ſerious Chriſtians who reſiſt him: Chriſt the Captain of our Salvation (who himſelf ſuffered, being tempted) knows how, and is able to ſuccour and deliver his Diſciples when they are tempted, and will make the Devil to ceaſe his Temptations and to depart from them.

The Apoſtle Peter (in 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.) ſays to the Saints, *Be ſober, be vigilant, becauſe your Adverſary the Devil, as a roaring Lyon, walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour: Whom reſiſt ſtedfaſt in the Faith, knowing that the ſame Afflictions are accompliſhed in your Brethren, that are in the World.*

Our mighty Saviour would have us, with firmneſs of Mind, to continue our Reſiſtance to the Devil, and without fear of being overcome by him.

O how often does our good God ſpeak comfortably to his People, and ſay unto them, *Fear not!*

In Iſa. xxvi. 3. the Prophet by the Inſpiration of the Holy Spirit, ſays to God, *Thou wilt keep him in perfect Peace whoſe Mind is ſtayed on thee, becauſe he truſteth in thee.* A Prediction this, which hath been the Means of much Comfort to many a Chriſtian in Times of Trouble.

But where is the Chriſtian that hath perfect Peace? The Words of the Prophet imply, that a truſting in God, or Faith in Exerciſe, is the Means of enjoying the ſweet Bleſſing of Peace, and of freedom from diſtreſſing Fears: And where is the Chriſtian that has his Faith and Truſt in God, always in due Exerciſe?

There is a Remainder of ſinful Corruption in the Souls of the beſt Chriſtains, ſo that the Good they would do, they ſometimes do not.

Abraham, the Father of Believers, and the glorious Example of a ſtrong Faith, had ſpecial and immediate Aſſurances of God's Favour and Protection.

The Lord ſaid unto Abram, I will make of thee a great Nation, and I will bleſs thee, and make thy Name great, and thou ſhall be a Bleſſing: And I will bleſs them that bleſs thee, and curſe him that curſeth thee: and in thee ſhall all Families of the Earth be bleſſed. Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3.

And in about a Year after theſe gracious Aſſurances, given him immediately from the Lord, when he went into Egypt to ſojourn there, his Faith was very weak, and unbelieving Fear diſtreſſed his Mind, and prevailed with him to deny his Wife, and to engage her to ſay, ſhe was his Siſter. Gen. xii. ver. 10—13.

In Gen. xiii. the ſacred Hiſtory informs us, that when Abram dwelt in the Land of Canaan, *The Lord ſaid unto him,—All the Land which thou ſeeſt, to thee will I give it, and to thy Seed for ever.* (ver. 15.) *And I will make thy Seed as the Duſt of the Earth.* (ver. 16.)

In Gen. xvii. 1. *When Abram was ninety Years old and nine, the Lord appeared unto Abram, and ſaid unto him, I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect; and I will made my Covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.* (ver. 2.) And changed his Name to Abraham. (ver. 5.) And ſaid, *I will make Nations of thee, and Kings ſhall come out of thee.* ver. 6.—*And I will eſtabliſh my Covenant between me and thee, and thy Seed afer thee in their Generations, for an everlaſting Covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy Seed after thee.* ver. 7.

As for Sarai thy Wife—I will bleſs her, and give thee a Son alſo of her: yea I will bleſs her, and ſhe ſhall

ſhall be a Mother of Nations; Kings of People ſhall be of her. ver. 15, 16.

And after all theſe Promiſes made to Abraham immediately by the almighty and faithful God, did he a ſecond Time deny his Wife: He did ſo at Gerar to Abimelech the King, who (when Abraham had told him ſhe was his Siſter) took her, but the Lord made Abimelech to reſtore her. (Gen. xx. 1, 2.)

This was about twenty and three Years after the Promiſes God had made to him, in Gen. xii.

O what are the beſt of Men, if left to themſelves! Lord, increaſe my Faith, and by thy holy Spirit keep it always in due Exerciſe!

Another Inſtance of human Frailty we have in David: The Prophet Samuel, by God's Appointment, anointed David to be king over Iſrael after the Death of Saul: He was, according to Chronology, anointed in the Year 1063 before Chriſt.

And yet this good Man in the Year 1058 before Chriſt, that is, about five Years after Samuel had anointed him to be King, almoſt deſpaired of God's performing his Promiſe. For in 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. we read that David ſaid in his Heart, *I ſhall now periſh one Day by the Hand of Saul.*

No wonder then, conſidering theſe Inſtances of Faith being ſometimes very weak, that ſerious Chriſtians at Times have their Doubts and Fears.

All our paſt Experiences prove to us, that God is a preſent Help in Trouble, that he has been ſo to us in all our paſt Diſtreſſes, he has ſupported us, and wrought one Deliverance for us after another; yet when we meet with new Afflictions, Diſappointments, or Straits, or Dangers, how often do unbelieving Doubts and Fears ariſe in our Minds; eſpecially if the Devil is ſuffered, for our Trial, to throw his Suggeſtions into our Minds.

Never-

Nevertheleſs, God has provided for our Comfort, and Remedies againſt perplexing Fears in Times of publick Calamities, whether preſent, or approaching.

Come my People (ſays our God) *enter thou into thy Chambers, and ſhut thy Doors about thee, and hide thyſelf as it were for a little Moment, until the Indignation be overpaſt: For behold, the Lord cometh out of his Place, to puniſh the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquities.* Iſa. xxvi. 20, 21.

1. Theſe Words ſhew, that there are Times when God will puniſh the Inhabitants of the Earth for their Iniquities.

2. That God has a gracious Regard to the Safety and the Comfort of his People, through the Time that his Judgments are deſtroying ſtubborn Sinners, even till the Indignation be overpaſt, till the Effects of his Wrath ceaſe: Therefore did he give Directions to his People, what Courſe they ſhould take for Safety and Comfort during the Day of his terrible Viſitation; *viz.* to enter into their Chambers, and ſhut the Doors about them, and to hide themſelves: This Direction, I apprehend ſignifies, that the Righteous do daily commit themſelves by Faith and Prayer to God's Protection, and walk cloſely and circumſpectly with him, in the Way of their Duty, and keep themſelves from all unneceſſary Converſe with the open Enemies of God, taking ſpecial Care that they be not Partakers of their Sins, leſt they alſo become Partakers of their Plagues.

God's People ſometimes grow careleſs and remiſs in their Obedience, and comply with the ſinful Cuſtoms of the Age in which they live: And to ſuch as theſe, the Prophet Zephaniah ſeems to ſpeak, when he ſaid, *Before the Decree bring forth, before the Day paſs as the Chaff, before the fierce Anger of*

of the LORD *come upon you, before the Day of the* LORD'S *Anger come upon you: Seek ye the Lord, all ye Meek of the Earth, which have wrought his Judgments* (in Time paſt,) *ſeek Righteouſneſs, ſeek Meekneſs; it may be, ye ſhall be hid in the Day of the* LORD'*s Anger*. Zeph. ii. 2, 3.

If we walk cloſely with God, in the Way of Faith and Holineſs, we may hope, he will free and preſerve us from terrifying Fears, even if we ſhould be ſurrounded with Danger.

Thoſe are comfortable Words in Prov. iii. 23. to ver. 26. *Then ſhalt thou walk in thy Way ſafely, and thy Foot ſhall not ſtumble. When thou lieſt down thou ſhalt not be afraid; yea, thou ſhalt lie down, and thy Sleep ſhall be ſweet.*

Be not afraid of ſudden Fear, neither of the Deſolation of the Wicked when it cometh; for the LORD *ſhall be thy Confidence, and ſhall keep thy Foot from being taken.*

The Loving-kindneſs of God, and his compaſſionate and and faithful Care of the Righteous, appear in all his Predictions, which relate to them.

The ſacred *Predictions* collected in the foregoing Papers, and the very many which have not been mentioned, do abundantly manifeſt, that the holy God in the Operations of his Providence, will make a Difference between the Righteous and the Wicked, between him that ſerveth God, and him that ſerveth him not.

They reveal the Bleſſings which all true Believers do enjoy, and may hope for in this Life, and after Death, and at the Reſurrection, and at the Day of Judgment, and through a never ending Eternity after it: They alſo Diſplay and that very awfully, the Curſes and Miſeries of the Wicked, while they remain on this Earth, and the unutterable Torments they muſt endure in their

Souls

Souls after Death to the Resurrection, and in their Souls and Bodies then reunited, at the Judgment of the great Day, and after the End of the World, in a Duration, which will never, never have an End.

The righteous and merciful God hath set before the Children of Men in his holy Word, *Life*, and *Good*; and *Death*, and *Evil*, (according to what is said, Deut. xxx. 15.)

O that every one was Wise to make the right Choice, to choose Life and Good, and act accordingly!

I have in these Letters, from an ardent Desire of being, with many others, an happy Instrument of promoting the everlasting Salvation, and Happiness, and present Comfort of Men, set before my Readers those Things which are of the greatest Importance for them to know, and consider.

I have set before them a Summary of the Laws of God, that so by comparing their Lives and Actions, with the holy Commandments, the Guilty may be convinced of their Sins, and of their Want of a Saviour. *Wherefore the Law was our Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by Faith.* Gal. iii. 24.

I have set before them the Curses, the Punishments, and Miseries predicted to befal them, except they repent of their Sins and believe in the Lord Jesus; that so they may be excited to rejoice in the glad Tidings of our glorious Redeemer, (who is both able and willing to save, even the Chief of Sinners,) and be prevailed with to become his sincere Disciples.

I have likewise, wtth as much Brevity and Clearness as I could, related the Evidences of Christ's being the promised *Messiah*, for the Conviction of those who have denied or doubted of the

the Verity of the Chriſtian Religion, and for the Confirmation of the Faith of ſerious Chriſtians.

I have taken Notice of the Holy Spirit dwelling in true Believers, and of their Juſtification, their Adoption to be the Children of God, and his Heirs to an Inheritance in Heaven, and of their Sanctification and Perſeverance till they receive the End of their Faith, the Salvation of their Souls: Theſe are Bleſſings predicted for all true Believers, and are neceſſary to their Salvation; and for theſe Reaſons, the faithful Miniſters of Chriſt do frequently preach on them, and are glad that they themſelves are Partakers of ſuch ineſtimable Benefits; and glad that they have ſuch powerful Motives to make uſe of, for ingaging Men to repent of their Sins, to believe and obey the Goſpel: And ſerious Chriſtians are glad to hear ſuch Doctrines preached, being ſenſible that theſe Bleſſings are neceſſary to the Safety, the Comfort, and Happineſs of their immortal Souls.

I have taken Notice of the principal Doctrines of the Goſpel, for rectifying the Sentiments of thoſe, who have entertained miſtaken Notions of them, and for the Eſtabliſhment of thoſe who believe them.

I have out of the Multitude, collected many Predictions of Bleſſings to the Righteous, to all who believe in Chriſt, and live according to the Goſpel, for their Conſolation at all Times, and under the various Afflictions and Troubles they may meet with in the common Courſe of Life: And have mentioned ſeveral precious Promiſes recorded in the Holy Scriptures for the Comfort of ſincere Chriſtians of every Denomination, when the righteous God ſhall viſit the Cities and Countries wherein they dwell, with his deſtroying Judgments for the Iniquities of the Inhabitants.

And I have not in this Service, endeavoured to expreſs myſelf with excellency of Speech, nor in Words which Man's Wiſdom teacheth; but which the Holy Ghoſt teacheth, comparing ſpiritual Things with Spiritual.

The *Word of God*, is the Sword of the *Spirit*. Epheſ. vi. 17. And *the Word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and is a Diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* Heb. iv. 12.

It is *the Law of the Lord*, that *is perfect, converting the Soul:* It is *the Teſtimony of the Lord that is ſure, making wiſe the Simple.* Pſal. xix. 7, 8.

It is by the Word of God, that the Holy Spirit bringeth Sinners to believe in Chriſt. St. Paul ſays, *So then Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God*, (read, or preached.) Rom. x. 17.

So it is by the Word of God, that the Saints are ſanctified; therefore ſaid the bleſſed Jeſus to his Father, *Sanctify them through thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth.* John xvii. 17.

And his Word of Promiſe is the Means of their Peace, their Comfort, and their Joy: O how ſhould Chriſtians prize the Holy Scriptures, and improve all Opportunities of reading, and hearing them?

PROPHANE Perſons will deride them: It is foretold, that, *There ſhall come in the laſt Days*, Scoffers *walking after their own Luſts:* 2 Pet. iii. 3. But in the Word of Truth, it is ſaid, that, *The Curſe of the* LORD *is in the Houſe of the Wicked; but he bleſſeth the Habitation of the Juſt. Surely he ſcorneth the Scorners: but he giveth Grace unto the Lowly.* Prov. iii. 33, 34.

It

It is expresly declared, that *Judgments are prepared for Scorners, and Stripes for the Back of Fools.* Prov. xix. 29. and there have been Instances of God's Indignation against such Offenders: For (as it is said, in Isa. xxix 30.) *The terrible One is brought to nought, and the Scorner is consumed, and all that watch for Iniquity are cut off.* God will magnify his Word above all his Name.

If there is any Error or Mistake in these Letters, it is mine; and those Things which are true and useful in them, I collected from the Holy Scriptures: And I earnestly pray that God, the God of all Grace, who delighteth not in the Death of the Wicked, and has demonstrated his Willingness to be reconciled to sinful Men, and displayed his amazing Love, by sending his only begotten and beloved Son into the World, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life: I earnestly pray that he will bless and prosper these Endeavours to the saving Benefit, and great Comfort of those, who shall read them; Amen, for the Sake of Jesus Christ who is worthy, Amen.

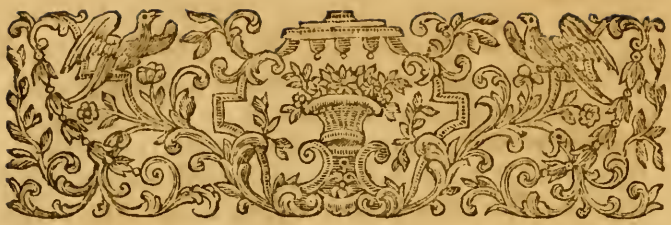
Psal. viii. 1, 2. *O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth! Who hast thy Glory above the Heavens.*

Out of the Mouth of Babes, and Sucklings hast thou ordained Strength, because of thine Enemies, that thou mightest still the Enemy, and the Avenger.

Therefore blessed and praised be thy Name, O Lord; because in so doing the more illustrious is thy Power, and the greater is thy Glory.

Luke ii. 14. *Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.*

LET-



LETTER X.

Containing an Anſwer to the Queſtion, viz. *Whether the publick Reading the Holy Scriptures on the* Lord's *Days, is an Ordinance of divine Appointment, and a Part of the Worſhip, which God requires from his People?*

THE Queſtion being about a Cuſtom, or Practice uſed in the publick Worſhip of God in many Congregations of Chriſtians, and in many others not uſed; it is of great Moment to enquire what is the Will of God concerning it.

There are two divine Laws, which will lead us to a right Determination, *viz.*

I. The Firſt is in Deut. iv. 2. where God the ſupreme Lawgiver, ſaid, YE SHALL NOT ADD TO THE WORD WHICH I COMMAND YOU, NEITHER SHALL YOU DIMINISH OUGHT FROM IT; THAT YE MAY KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD YOUR GOD.

As

As if it had been ſaid, that ye may keep them pure, and intire, without any Addition to, or Diminution from them.

II. The other is in Deut. xii. 32. where our holy God ſaid, WHAT THING SOEVER I COMMAND YOU, OBSERVE TO DO IT: THOU SHALT NOT ADD THERETO, NOR DIMINISH FROM IT.

Theſe LAWS have never been repealed: No; but they are obligatory in all Ages, and in all Places: The Reaſons of them are always the ſame; and no Creatures, neither Men, nor Angels, have a Power paramount, or ſuperior to that of the glorious Creator, nor Authority to alter, to add to, or take away any Thing from what the moſt high God has commanded, who can cruſh Angels, and Men into nothing, as eaſily as he made them: And therefore the moſt wiſe, the moſt potent, and the moſt exalted among Angels or Men, ſhould never dare to change, or preſume to mend the Ordinances he has appointed.

O my Soul! Dread the being a Tranſgreſſor of the mentioned Laws! If I ſhould make any Addition to the Things which the LORD hath commanded; would it not ſignify, that I think them defective? And if I lay aſide the Uſe of any one of his Ordinances, does it not denote, that I think it needleſs; that I think it would have been better if it had not been enjoined? And as to both theſe Ways of Acting, are they not an Impeachment of the divine Wiſdom, and an Uſurpation of the divine Authority? Dreadful Imagination! to think of mending any of the Inſtitutions of the infinitely wiſe, and holy God!

Horrid Thoughts! Horrid Thoughts! LORD evermore preſerve me from them, and keep me from

from complying with any Alteration of thine Ordinances! And enable me always to keep them pure, and intire! Amen, for the Sake of Jesus Christ, and for the Sake of thy great Name.

If the publick Reading the Holy Scriptures in the Assemblies of Christians for the Worship of God, be an Addition to the Things, which the Lord hath commanded; if it is a Thing, he would not have to be done, it should be laid aside in every Congregation of his People:

But, if on searching the Holy Scriptures, it shall appear, that the Reading them in the worshiping Assemblies of Christians on the Lord's Days, is an Ordinance which God has appointed, and what he will have to be done, then it ought to be done in every Congregation of Christians on those holy Days; and the Neglect of it, is a manifest Transgression of the Laws mentioned.

I may further observe, that if this Practice of publick Reading the Sacred Scriptures is an Ordinance of God, and Part of the Worship he requires from his People, then Sermons and the other Parts of the holy Service should be so shortned, as to allow Time for a sufficient Use of it.

Now in Answer to the QUESTION, although the publick Worship of God consists of several Parts; it will be sufficient, in regard to our Subject, if I take Notice of the two following, *viz.*

1. That the publick Worship, consists in solemn Addresses to God: When Christians join together in offering up at the Throne of Grace in the Name of Christ, our glorious Mediator, Petitions, and Supplications for Grace, Mercies and Blessings, for themselves and others: These Prayers signify a Sense of God's Knowledge of all the Wants of his People, and of his Power and Goodness to supply them.

Thus

Thus Thankſgivings for Benefits received by us, and by others, are Acts of Worſhip, as they ſignify and expreſs to God, grateful Acknowledgments of his Mercy manifeſted by his beſtowing them.

And thus all Expreſſions to God, which denote a ſerious Senſe of his glorious Attributes, and thoſe which are expreſſive of a filial Fear of him, and of our Love to him, our Truſt and Hope in him, and our Reſolution (by the Help of his holy Spirit) to ſerve and obey him, are Acts of religious Worſhip: There is no Doubt of all this.

2. The Worſhip of God conſiſts in a ſerious Attention and Regard to what *He ſpeaketh* unto us.

The great God ſpeaketh unto Men by the Holy Scriptures, by his Word *read*, and by his Word *preached*.

God gives us leave to ſpeak unto him, as in the fore-mentioned Part of his Worſhip, and we ſhould rejoice that he condeſcends to ſpeak unto us; and we ſhould know, that he commands us to hear him.

A ſerious attentive *Hearing* his Word, that is, his Holy Scriptures, is expreſſive of Reverence to him, and of our Regard to his Authority, and to the Doctrines, the Precepts, the Promiſes and Threatnings of his Word, and to the Records of his Providence, contained in the hiſtorical Parts of it.

This is a very important Part of the Worſhip we owe to God, the Good of our Salvation, as will appear from the Revelation he has made of his Will.

In Exod. xxxiv. 7. We are informed that, *Moſes took the Book of the Covenant, and read it*

(and all the Commandments of the Lord) *in the Audience of all the People.*

I may here obſerve, that in every Age, and in every Congregation of God's People, there are always the ſame Reaſons for the publick Reading of the Holy Scriptures, *viz.* to inſtruct the Ignorant, and to ſtir up the pure Minds of the Godly by way of Remembrance.

In Joſhua viii. 34, 35. It is ſaid, *Joſhua read all the Words of the Law, the Bleſſings and Curſings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was* NOT A WORD OF ALL THAT MOSES *commanded, which Joſhua read not before all the Congregation of Iſrael, with the Women, and the little Ones, and the Strangers that were converſant among them.*

The important End for which Joſhua performed this Service, was that the People, old and young, might know the Commandments, and all the revealed Will of God: He did it as a Means of communicating to them that Knowledge, which was neceſſary for them to obtain.

I think it may be ſaid, that People in every Age, and every Congregation do very much want the ſame Means of Knowledge. And that the publick Reading the divine Laws, and the Writings of the Prophets and Apoſtles, may with the divine Bleſſing contribute as much to the ſame holy Purpoſes as in the Days of Joſhua.

In Nehemiah viii. 1. We are told, *That all the People gathered themſelves together as one Man. And they ſpake unto Ezra the Scribe, to bring the Book of the Law of Moſes, which the Lord had commanded to Iſrael.*

In Verſes 2, 3. We are informed that, *Ezra the Prieſt brought the Law before the Congregation both of Men and Women, and all that could hear with Underſtanding, and that he read therein from the*

the Morning until Midday before the Men, and the Women, and those that could understand; and the Ears of all the People were attentive to the Book of the Law.

In this Account it is observable,

1. That the Reading of the Laws of God, or the Holy Scriptures, which were then extant, was at the Request of the People. A good Example for those People to imitate, who have not had the Opportunity of hearing the Holy Scriptures publickly read.

2. That in this Assembly, much of the Law of the Lord was read, as appears from the Reading of it, from Morning to the Midday.

3. That all the People were attentive to the Reading: The holy God by his Word read, did speak unto all his People there assembled; and and their serious Attention to it, was a *Service of Worship* to him, expressive of their Reverence of him, and of their Regard to his Authority, and to his holy Commandments: And this is an Example, which ought to be imitated by all People when the Laws of the LORD are publickly read, and they have Opportunity of hearing them.

In Deut. iv. 10. God said unto Moses, *Gather me the People together, and I will make them hear my Words; that they may learn to fear me all the Days that they shall live upon the Earth, and that they may teach their Children.*

The Reason, which the great God in this Scripture assigns for his commanding Moses to read publickly, and the People to hear his Words so read, shews that God intended more than his Words being once read by Moses, at the giving the Law at Mount Sinai; even to appoint it an Ordinance for ever to be observed by his People

throughout all their Generations, ſo long as there ſhould be a People to learn, to fear, and ſerve him, and ſo long as there ſhould be Children, that need Inſtruction.

And the Diſuſe of this Ordinance, is the Way to have People ignorant of God and their Duty; ignorant of the Things he has revealed, and incapable of teaching their Children, what God would have them taught.

In Deut. xii. 28. Moſes ſaid unto the People, *Obſerve and* HEAR *all theſe Words, which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy Children after thee for ever; when thou doeſt that which is good and right in the Sight of the Lord thy God.*

Here we may obſerve,

1. A Precept to the People, *viz. To hear all the Words which the Lord hath commanded:* Which implies, that it is the Duty of thoſe whoſe Office it is to inſtruct the People, to read unto them, all the Words which the Lord hath commanded.

2. That Peoples hearing, and obeying the Words of the Lord, doing that which is good and right in his Sight, is the Way to have the Bleſſing of God upon themſelves, and their Children.

The Book of the Covenant of God with his People, and his Laws, his Statutes and Ordinances were publickly read, and heard in the Days of Moſes, who wrote the Book of Deuteronomy about forty Years after his firſt reading of the Law to the People; and afterwards in the Time of Joſhua. But was the Reading them *a Part of God's publick Worſhip* on the Holy Sabbaths?

To this Queſtion, I return to myſelf this Anſwer, *viz.* that if nothing had been ſaid about it in the Hiſtory contained in the Holy Scriptures, I ſhould conclude that it was ſo; becauſe it

it is as needful a Means of propagating the Knowledge of God, and of his revealed Will, and of bringing People to fear him, and to do that which is good and right in the Sight of the LORD in every Age, Country, and Congregation, as in the Days of Moſes and Joſhua. But from the Holy Scriptures we know certainly, that it was a Part of the publick Worſhip every Sabbath Day.

In Acts xiii. 27. The Apoſtle Paul ſays, *For they, that dwell at Jeruſalem, and their Rulers, becauſe they knew him not,* (did not know Chriſt) *nor yet the Voice of the Prophets, which are* READ EVERY SABBATH DAY, *they have fullfilled them in condemning him.*

In Acts xv. 21. It is ſaid, *For Moſes of old Time hath in every City them that preach him, being read in the Synagogues* (in every City) EVERY SABBATH DAY.

Hence it is evident, that the publick Reading the Scriptures then extant, *viz.* the Writings of Moſes and the Prophets, was part of the publick Worſhip of God, through the Times of the Old Teſtament: And the Reading them is here called *preaching them.*

As it was an Ordinance of God's commanding, ſo it was conſcientiouſly obſerved by the People through the Times of the Old Teſtament: And the Laws which enjoined it, God has never repealed; and no Angels or Men have Authority to ſet it aſide.

Our bleſſed Redeemer did himſelf join in this Part of divine Worſhip: In Luke iv. 15, 16. It is ſaid, *He taught in their* (the Jews) *Synagogues, being glorified of all. And* (that) *he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and as his Cuſtom was, he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and ſtood up for to read*; which ſhews his Approba-

tion of the Ordinance; and therefore all his Disciples should prize it, and gladly give their Attendance on the Sabbath Days, and hear the Word of God contained in the Law of Moses, and in the Writings of the Prophets and Apostles, and hear with great Attention and Reverence.

In Mat. xxiii. 1, 2. we read thus, *Then spake Jesus unto the Multitude, and* (also) *to his Disciples, saying, The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses Seat: All therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe,* (of the Laws of God by Moses) *that observe and do.* These Injunctions of Christ shew, that he did not set aside the Ordinance, but required the Multitude to hear the Word of God, and to obey it.

If that very antient Custom of Reading the Holy Scriptures ever Sabbath Day as a Part of the publick Worship, was a meer human Appointment, our blessed Saviour who said, *Every Plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.* (Mat. xv. 13.) doubtless would not have conformed himself to it, and joined in that Part of religious Worship as he did: And it appears most evident from what has been noted, that this Part of Worship was a divine Institution; and the Reasons which God himself gives for commanding it, prove that he intended it to continue so long as he had a Church and People in the World.

But this also appears evident from his own Words in Luke xvi. 19, &c. where we have the Parable of a certain rich Man, that was clothed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared sumptuously every Day; and of a Beggar named *Lazarus*, who was laid at his Gate full of Sores: These both died; but their Condition immediately after Death was vastly different; for the poor Beggar was carried by Angels up to Heaven into Abraham's

ham's Boſom, but the rich Man was taken away from all his Riches and Grandeur, and voluptuous Way of living, and carried down into Hell, and there was tormented with Flames unquenchable.

And this rich, now, miſerable Sinner, ſeeing Lazarus with Abraham, intreated that he might be ſent to his five Brethren, to teſtify to them the Torments he endured, that ſo being forewarned, they might be excited to an holy Life, leſt they alſo ſhould come to the ſame Place of Torment.

Our bleſſed Redeemer repreſents Abraham as giving this Anſwer, *viz. They have Moſes and the Prophets, let them hear them.* ver. 29.

And when the rich Man replied, *Nay Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the Dead, they will repent:* But Abraham ſaid, *If they will not hear Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the Dead.*

We may from theſe Words which our bleſſed Saviour repreſents Abraham as ſpeaking to the rich Man, learn,

1. That the publick Reading of the Writings of Moſes and the Prophets, and conſequently the Books of the New Teſtament, was an Ordinance appointed by God the ſupreme Lawgiver.

2. That this Ordinance was appointed as the Means of bringing Men to repent of their Sins, and to know, and love God, to believe and obey his Word revealed in his Holy Scriptures.

3. That it is a Duty incumbent on the Miniſters of Chriſt, and one great Part of their Work, ſince the Eſtabliſhment of the Goſpel Diſpenſation, to read publickly the Holy Scriptures.

4. That it is the Duty of all Sorts of People to attend on the publick Reading of them: And there are Promiſes to engage them to this Duty.

In

In Isa. lv. 3. our merciful God says, *Incline your Ear, and come unto me, hear and your Souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you.*

It is a very great Duty for People to read the Word of God, but that is not the Duty enjoined in this Text, there is no Use of the Eyes in that Exercise; the Expression, incline your *Ear*, and *Hear*, shews plainly, that the Duty enjoined is a serious Attention to the publick Reading of the Holy Scriptures.

In Luke xi. 28. It is said by our dear Redeemer, *Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.*

I may add, that as the Reading the Scriptures of the Old Testament, was a sufficient Means to bring Men to repent; so the Reading the Holy Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament, is a sufficient Means to the same End.

By *sufficient*, I would not be understood as if I thought all other Means needless and useless: For Parents teaching their Children the Things which the Lord has commanded in his Word; and the Ministers of God, whose Office is to instruct the People by explaining, and discoursing, or preaching on particular Parts of the Sacred Scriptures, are great Duties, which the Lord hath commanded, and of great Importance to the People: But how? Only as they help the People more clearly to understand those Parts of Scripture which the Ministers of Christ preach upon, and which are, or ought to be read unto them.

The Apostle Paul in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, (writ about sixty Years after our Saviours Nativity,) speaking of the Jews says, *But their Minds were blinded, for until this Day remaineth the same Vail, untaken away in the Reading of the Old Testament, which Vail is done away in Christ:*

But

But even unto this Day, when Moſes (that is, the Word of God by Moſes) *is read, the Vail is upon their Hearts.* 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

What the Apoſtle here obſerves ſhews, that the Writings of Moſes and the Old Teſtament, were in his Time publickly Read on the Sabbath Days. And hence we may conclude, that the Writings of the New Teſtament, the Goſpels, and the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles, and the Revelations by the Apoſtle John, which containeth further diſcoveries of the Will of God, and the Way of our Salvation, were likewiſe publickly Read, as a Part of the Worſhip we owe to God, the God of our Salvation.

And in 1 Cor. i. 1, 2. St. Paul directs that Epiſtle not only to the Church of God at Corinth, but to *them that were ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus,* (wherever they inhabited) *called to be Saints, with all them that in every Place call upon the Name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

In 2 Cor. i. 1. The Apoſtle directs that Epiſtle, *unto the Church of God at Corinth, with all the Saints which are in all Achaia.*

In Coloſ. iv. 16. The Apoſtle who had directed the Epiſtle to the Saints, and faithful Brethren, which were in Chriſt at Coloſſe, (Chap. i. 1.) ſays to them, *When this Epiſtle is read amongſt you, cauſe that it be read alſo in the Church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewiſe read the Epiſtle from Laodicea.*

We may very reaſonably conclude from ſuch Paſſages as theſe, that God intended that the Writings of the Apoſtles which make the Books of the *New Teſtament*, ſhould be read in all the Churches of Chriſt.

The Reaſons for the publick Reading of the New Teſtament, are more numerous than thoſe for the Old ; on the Account that it is a better

Teſtament, or Covenant, (Heb. ix. 6.) and that it contains a more clear Revelation of the *everlaſting Goſpel*, (Rev. xiv. 6.) *the Goſpel of Peace*, (Epheſ. vi. 15.) *the Goſpel of our Salvation*, (Epheſ. i. 13.) *the Goſpel of Chriſt*, (Rom. i. 16) *the Goſpel of the bleſſed God*, (1 Tim. i. 11.) *that glorious Goſpel.* (2 Cor. iv. 4.) And brighter Manifeſtations of the Love of God in ſending his only begotten Son into the World to ſave Sinners: On the Account that the New Teſtament, contains *four Hiſtories* of the Life, Doctrines, Miracles, Sufferings, Prophecies, Death, Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion into Heaven of the Son of God: And more diſtinct Inſtructions in thoſe Things we are to believe, to practiſe, and to hope for: And on the Account that the New Teſtament contains the other Writings of the Apoſtles, ſhewing us more plainly the Way of Faith and Holineſs, and forewarning us of all the great Events that are to be brought to paſs in the World.

The Conſideration of theſe things convinces me, that it is the Will of God, that the Scriptures of the New, as well as thoſe of the Old Teſtament, ſhould be read in the Congregation of Chriſtians, as Part of the publick Worſhip, he requires of us, and as a conſiderable Part of it; and that by a ſerious and attentive Hearing, we are to expreſs our Reverence of God, and Regard to his Authority and to the gracious Contents of his Word, and to ſignify our Reſolution always to believe and obey it.

In the third Verſe of the firſt Chapter of the Book of the Revelations to St. John, it is ſaid, *Bleſſed is he that readeth, and they that hear the Words of this Prophecy, and keep thoſe Things which are written therein.*

This Text ſhews, that notwithſtanding thoſe Parts of it, which are difficult to be interpreted, God

God requires all Chriſtians to read it and to hear it, and thoſe who cannot read, ſhould be more diligent to hear it: Which implies, that it belongs to the Office of ſome, even of the Miniſters of Chriſt to read it publickly, that the People may have the opportunity of hearing it; and may be informed of thoſe many uſeful Inſtructions contained in it, and which are eaſy to be underſtood.

I am not for laying aſide the preaching Sermons on ſome one, or a few more Verſes of the Holy Scriptures, which has been in the paſt Ages, as well as in the preſent, one right and good Way of teaching the Word of God, of publiſhing the glad Tidings of Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt, and inculcating the great Things God has revealed to us: And I hope 'twill be always in Uſe to the End of the World, for the Converſion of Sinners, and for the Confirmation, Edification, and Comfort of the Saints.

But then theſe Sermons on the Lord's Days, ſhould not be ſo enlarged as to exclude the publick Reading the Holy Scriptures; ſince that is one of the Parts of publick Worſhip, which the Lord requires of us, which is as needful now for the Good of immortal Souls as ever, and will be as much wanted in all future Ages.

The People ought to have the Opportunity of hearing the Words of God, in that Order and Connexion in which his Wiſdom has diſpoſed them, and I think we ſhould ſhew our Reverence of his Wiſdom by the publick Reading them as they were written.

And as God will be glorified by a due Performance of this Part of his publick Worſhip, ſo with his Bleſſing, it may be very beneficial to the ſeveral Sorts of People that may be Hearers.

It may be an happy Means of edifying and comforting the moſt *ſerious Chriſtians:* The Paſſages

of Scripture which they ſhall hear, may occaſion ſuitable pious Thoughts, and excite holy Deſires, Affections and Reſolutions, according to the Matter of them.

When a ſerious Chriſtian hears the Commandments, he can ſay in his Mind to God: Lord! they are all of them holy, wiſe, juſt and good; O how love I thy Law! Do thou by thy bleſſed Spirit make it the Subject of my Meditation Day and Night, in every Opportunity and Occaſion for it!

When from the hiſtorical Parts of the Scriptures he hears of a wicked Man, and of God's Vengeance upon him, he may think thus; By Nature I am the ſame; but O my good God, it is thy Grace which has made the Difference, and reſtrained me from thoſe Sins, which were the Ruin of his Soul and Body! I praiſe and thank thee, for the Reſtraints thou didſt lay on me, and for all the Workings of thy holy Spirit in me!

When he hears the Account of any of thoſe who feared God, and walked daily with him, and of the Tokens of his Favour to them, he may ſay within himſelf: Here, O my Soul, is an Example for thy Imitation! O my God make me ſuch a faithful Servant to thee, and make me to excel in Faith, Holineſs and Humility!

When he hears read the Hiſtory of the Idolatry, and other Immoralities of God's own People, when he hears of their Departures from God, and the long Abounding of Iniquities among them, and of the deſtroying Judgments which his righteous Providence brought upon them; he may think, that 'tis a dreadful Thing for a Nation to forſake their God, and to go on in a Courſe of Rebellion againſt him; and that no ſuch Nation can eſcape his Vengeance without Reformation; and hereby he may be excited the more to fear God,

God, and to avoid all thoſe Things which will provoke him.

When he hears read the Account of God's People repenting, and humbling themſelves, and of their reforming their Lives, and returning to God with earneſt Supplications for Pardon, for Mercy and Deliverance; and hears how mercifully God forgave them, and delivered them from their Enemies, and made the Storms of his Vengeance to ceaſe; and Peace, Tranquility and Proſperity to return; he may think how gracious is the great God! How willing to be reconciled to his diſobedient People upon their Repentance: O my God, help me to love thee more and more for thy immenſe Goodneſs! *Oh that all Men would praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, for his wonderful Works to the Children of Men!* (Pſal. cvii. 15. 24.)

And when the Pſalms of David are read, which are full of pious Petitions, when he hears thoſe which are ſuitable to his Caſe, he may ſay in his Heart, Lord grant this Petition to me!

Pſal. cxix. 12. it is ſaid, *Bleſſed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy Statutes; deal bountifully with thy Servant, that I may live and keep thy Word; open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wonderous Things out of thy Law.* ver. 17, 18.

A Multitude of Inſtances might be mentioned to ſhew how the Reading the Holy Scriptures, as Part of the publick Worſhip of God, may be profitable to the moſt pious Hearers, although they daily read them at Home.

But this Ordinance in every Congregation, is more eſpecially needful for thoſe who never read, and ſeldom hear the Holy Scriptures; it is neceſſary for thoſe who remain in a State of Ignorance, of Unbelief, and Diſobedience.

And if ſuch Perſons ſhall attend the publick Worſhip in Aſſemblies of Chriſtians, in which the Holy Scriptures are read evey Sabbath Day, as well as preached, they will be preſent when, and where both thoſe divine Ordinances are adminiſtered, which our good God, the God of Salvation, has appointed for the Inſtruction, and Converſion of Sinners, as well as for the Edification of the Saints: They will be where they will hear that Word of God, *which is perfect converting the Soul*; they are in the Way of being made wiſe unto Salvation. And who can tell but the Holy Spirit may this Sabbath, or another, ſet home on their Conſciences ſome Word of God to heir Conviction, and to the bringing them to Repentance towards God, and to Faith in our Lord Jeſus.

It is good to be where God would have us to be, and uſing the Means to obtain ſaving Knowledge.

But they who will neither read, nor hear the Word of the Lord, are in the direct Way to die in their Sins, and ſink down in the Gulph of endleſs Miſeries.

Theſe are ignorant, and very ignorant of thoſe Things God would have them to know; ignorant both of his Laws, and of his Goſpel.

They are ignorant of his Laws; no wonder then that they live in Diſobedience to many of them.

It appears therefore to me a Matter of great Importance, that the holy Laws of God, not only the Ten Commandments, which are but a *Summary* of them; but his other moral Precepts, ſome recorded in the Old, and ſome in the New Teſtament, ſhould be made publick; and the Reading the Holy Scriptures every Lord's Day, in every Congregation of Chriſtians, is the proper Way of doing it.

This

This Reading would be a ſetting before People, *A Lamp unto their Feet, and a Light unto their Path.* (Pſal. cxix. 105.) It would be a ſhewing them the Way in which they ſhould go, a ſhewing them what they ſhould do, and what they ſhould not do; and may be a Means of preventing much Sin, and of keeping ſome People from thoſe ſinful Ways in which they allow themſelves; and a Means of their becoming ſincere Chriſtians.

There are ſome Laws which either are not commonly known, or are not regarded:

It is commanded, *Children obey your Parents; Honour thy Father and thy Mother:* And theſe Laws are apprehended to bind Children while they are young: But there is another Law, which binds them when they become Men, and Women, I mean that in Levit. xix. 3. *Ye ſhall fear every Man his Mother, and his Father.* And that in Levit. x. 8 — 11. which is as binding on all the Miniſters of Chriſt in all Ages, as it was on Aaron, and his Sons and their Deſcendants; but theſe have been taken Notice of already.

In Deut. xxv. 13, 14, 16. God, the righteous and juſt God, ſays, *Thou ſhalt not have in thy Bag divers Weights, a great and a ſmall. But thou ſhalt have a perfect, and a juſt Weight, a perfect, and a juſt Meaſure, ſhalt thou have: For all that do ſuch Things,* (viz. keeping divers Weights, and divers Meaſures) *and all that do unrighteouſly, are Abomination unto the Lord thy God.*

Theſe are moral Precepts, and ſhould be known to all Men.

The Doctrines of the Goſpel which we are to believe, and very many of the Duties incumbent on Chriſtians, are frequently preached by the faithful Miniſters of Chriſt of every Denomination, and bleſſed be God that they are ſo; but this does not render the Reading the Holy Scriptures needleſs

to

to the moſt knowing Chriſtians: They find Inſtruction and Comfort in their daily Converſes with them in their Cloſet, and can alſo profit by them when they hear them read in Publick.

But as there are ſo many in moſt Congregations, who have neither read, or heard the Holy Scriptures; methinks, all who truly love God, and believe in Chriſt, and wiſh all their fellow Creatures to be not only almoſt, but altogether ſuch as they are, in Covenant with God, and ſincere Diſciples of the bleſſed Jeſus: Methinks, I ſay, they ſhould rejoice, that God has made the Reading his Word a Part of the publick Worſhip of Him.

It is a proper Means of diffuſing in the Minds of the Hearers, the Knowledge of thoſe Things which concern their Salvation, and everlaſting Felicity, and alſo their Happineſs, their Comfort and Joy, while in this World.

I apprehend, that if three or four Chapters of the Holy Scriptures (more or leſs, as Circumſtances ſhall direct) were publickly Read on our Lord's Days in the Time of divine Worſhip, and the Miniſter at the End of each Chapter recited the Contents of it, a little fuller than the large Contents which in ſome Bibles are prefixed to the Chapters; with brief general Obſervations when needful, it would contribute much to the Hearers Underſtanding of the bleſſed Revelation contained in them.

It is a pious Cuſtom of ſome Maſters on the Sabbath Day, to read ſome Part of a good Book to their Families; and their doing ſo, ſhews an Eſteem for the Author of the Book, as well as for the Contents of it:

And ſo the ſerious Reading God's Book is paying a Reſpect to the wiſe, the great, and the gracious Author of it.

And

And when this is done ſeriouſly in Publick, it is a publick Act of Reverence to God, and of Love to his Word; it is a publick Act of religious Worſhip, and our moſt reaſonable Service.

And therefore I cannot but wiſh that the Uſe of this Ordinance, this ancient, this moſt beneficial Ordinance, divinely inſtituted, may obtain and be improved in every Congregation of Chriſtains, for the Glory of God, and for the Sake of the many in every worſhiping Aſſembly, who do greatly want it.

I have already obſerved, that in Rev. i. 3. it is ſaid, *Bleſſed is he that readeth, and they that hear the Words of this Prophecy, and keep thoſe Things which are written therein.*

I would now a little more diſtinctly mention the Particulars expreſſed, or evidently implied in this Text, which ought to influence the Practice of all Chriſtians, *viz.*

1. That God requires every Perſon (who can read) to read his Book of the Revelations, and to keep thoſe Things which are written therein: Which ſignifies that they believe the Doctrines, the Promiſes, and Threatnings, and obey the Commandments contained in it.

This is a juſt Inference from God's declaring that every ſuch Perſon is *bleſſed:* He is bleſſed of God, and bleſſed by him.

2. It is likewiſe evident, that God requires the publick Reading his Book of the Revelations, without which People cannot hear it.

3. That it is the Duty of Chriſtians to attend the publick Reading of this Book.

4. It may be concluded that it is the Duty of the Miniſters of Chriſt to perform this Office.

5. We

5. We may infer that God requires Men to read his other Books of the Holy Scripture, and to hear them publickly read, and to keep thoſe Things which are contained in them: And likewiſe, that it is incumbent on the Miniſters of Chriſt publickly to read them; eſpecially thoſe Parts of the Holy Scriptures, which contain the Doctrines, the Promiſes and Threatnings, the Statutes, the Ordinances, and the Laws of God; the Predictions recorded in his Word, and the Hiſtories of the Righteous, and the Wicked, and of God's Dealings with them.

And the Bleſſedneſs ſpoken of ſhould be a Motive prevailing both with Miniſters and People, conſcientiouſly to perform the Duty now mentioned.

We ſhould always remember that *there is one* LAWGIVER, *who is able to ſave, and to deſtroy.* (James iv. 12.) We ſhould always endeavour to know the revealed Will of our gracious God, and faithfully act according to it.

Should not a People ſeek unto their God? it is ſaid, Iſa. viii. 19. and in ver. 20. *To the Law, and to the Teſtimony; if they ſpeak not* (i. e. do not teach) *according to this Word, it is becauſe there is no Light*, or Truth, *in them.*

It appears to me moſt evident, that the right and true ANSWER to the Queſtion conſidered, is this, *viz.*

Anſwer: *That the publick Reading the Holy Scriptures in the Aſſemblies of Chriſtians every* (Sabbath, or) *Lord's Day, is an Ordinance of divine Appointment, and Part of that Worſhip which God requires from his People.*

It is hence manifeſt, that the Diſuſe of this Ordinance, is a taking away from the Things, which the Lord hath commanded; and is a Tranſ-

greſſion of thoſe Laws which were mentioned in the Introduction of this Letter.

HAPPY will it be, if all the Societies of Chriſtians of every Denomination ſhall examine by the ſacred Scriptures, their religious Cuſtoms in the Worſhip of God; of the great God, jealous of his own Authority and Glory; and if they ſhall lay aſide every Uſage, which is an Addition to the Things which the Lord hath commanded, and ſhall ſet up the Uſe of every Ordinance of God, which has hitherto been neglected.

The CONSEQUENCE, the glorious Conſequence, will be an endearing *Coalition* of the different Sects of Chriſtians, and a bleſſed Reformation among the profeſſed Diſciples of the holy Jeſus. Then will Idolatry and Superſtition ceaſe among Chriſtians, then the Worſhip of God will be more pure, and intire, more agreeable to his revealed Will, and free from Additions to, and Diminutions from his Ordinances, which he has ſtrictly forbidden, and which he greatly abhors; and therefore it will be more pleaſing to him, and more comfortable and profitable to thoſe who ſincerely worſhip him.

O gracious God, by the Influence of thy holy Spirit on the Minds of Chriſtians of every Denomination, do thou bring ſuch a Reformation to paſs! Do thou convince all Men of the Excellency and Value of thy WORD! Oh, that they could truly ſay unto thee, *The Law of thy Mouth is better to me than Thouſands of Gold and Silver!* (Pſal. cxix. 72.) LORD excite them both to read and hear it! Open their Underſtanding, that they may underſtand it, and help them by thy Grace duly to improve it! Amen.

2 Tim. iii. 15. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES; *which are able to make thee wiſe unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Chriſt Jeſus.*

A pious Poet well expreſſed himſelf to the gracious Author of our Bible, in the following Lines, *viz.*

Let all the *Heathen* Writers join
To form one perfect Book;
Great God, if once compar'd with thine,
How mean their Writings look!

Not the moſt perfect Rules they gave,
Could ſhew one Sin forgiven;
Nor lead one Step beyond the Grave;
But thine conduct to Heaven.

WATTS's Pſalms, p. 318.

Pſal. cvii. 8. *Oh that Men would praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, and for his wonderful Works to the Children of Men!* Amen.

CONCLUSION.

THIS, and the preceeding Letters, are addreſſed unto all Men, becauſe all Men are moſt nearly concerned in the Contents of them; and becauſe all who ſhall believe *the Words of the* LORD cited in them will have Peace, Comfort, and Honour in this World; they will have that Honour which cometh from God only, the Honour of being his true Servants, his beloved Children, and his Heirs; and they will have inexpreſſible Felicities, and Glories in that endleſs World to which we are going. And at the Day of Judgment they will receive the Reward of the Inheritance, they will be put into the Poſſeſſion of a Kingdom and a Crown, which Chriſt has purchaſed, and in his Goſpel promiſed, to all his ſincere Diſciples, who ſhall reign in Life by him. Rom. v. 17.

That

That this may be the Caſe of thoſe, who ſhall read theſe Papers, is the Prayer of,

their faithful Servant,

London, March 17, 1761.
Et in Anno Vitæ, 83.

THEOPHILUS LOBB.

FINIS.